

**A TIME FOR REFORM:
THE WOMAN SUFFRAGE CAMPAIGN IN RURAL TEXAS, 1914-1919**

A Dissertation

by

KEVIN CONRAD MOTL

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2006

Major Subject: History

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ABSTRACT

A Time for Reform: The Woman Suffrage Campaign in Rural Texas, 1914-1919.

(August 2006)

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This dissertation offers a new narrative for the local woman suffrage movement in nine rural counties in Texas. I argue that, unlike cities, where women used dense organizational networks to create a coherent suffrage movement, conservatism inherent in rural Texas denied suffrage advocates the means to achieve similar objectives. Rural women nevertheless used the suffrage campaign to articulate feminist sensibilities, thereby reflecting a process of modernization ongoing among American women.

Rural suffrage advocates faced unique obstacles, including the political influence of James E. Ferguson, who served as Governor for almost two administrations. Through Ferguson's singular personality, a propaganda campaign that specifically targeted rural voters, and Ferguson's own tabloid *Ferguson Forum*, rural voters found themselves constantly bombarded by messages about how they should view questions of reform in their state. The organizational culture that sustained suffrage organizations in urban Texas failed to do so in rural Texas. Concerned for their status, rural women scorned activism and those who pursued it. Absent an organized campaign, the success of suffrage initiatives in rural Texas depended on locally unique circumstances. Key

factors included demographic trends, economics, local politics, and the influence of frontier cultural dynamics.

The tactics and rhetoric employed by rural suffragists in Texas generally reflected those used by suffragists nationwide. While rural suffragists mustered arguments grounded in natural and constitutional rights, rural voters responded more to the claim that votes projected woman's feminine virtue into public life, which accommodated prevailing attitudes about woman's place. The First World War supplied rural suffragists with patriotic rhetoric that resonated powerfully with Texans.

Rural Texas women successfully reframed public dialogue about women's roles, articulating feminist ideas through their work. Unlike rural clubwomen, suffragists pursued the ballot as a means to improve the status of all women. Feminist ideas increasingly obtained with women in visible leadership, and eventually reached all rural women, as countless hundreds registered to vote, and still more educated themselves on political issues. In doing so, rural women in Texas joined women across America in challenging the limits of domesticity and envisioning a fuller role for women in public life.

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This study began as a seminar paper in Professor Julia Blackwelder's course on early twentieth-century American history. I am as startled as anyone that it became the inspiration for this dissertation. I am also thankful, however, that she challenged my class to pursue subjects of local interests for our research. That challenge led me to an invaluable research experience and a fascinating story about exceptional women. As with any scholarly effort, this work could not have been finished without the patient assistance and steadfast support of legions. In researching this dissertation, I have seen more of Texas and learned more about its people than I have ever known, and I am pleased to report that the congeniality and warmth often attributed to small-town Texas continues to exist. Several individuals made my travels productive, enjoyable, and memorable, and I would like to thank them here.

In Anderson County, I owe a debt to Karla Lang of the Palestine Public Library, who gave me unrestricted access to the resources of the Special Collections there, and Bonnie Woolverton of the Anderson County Historical Commission, whose work on Kate Hunter contributed to my understanding of her suffrage activism. In Donley County, I am indebted to Judy Burlin of the Clarendon Chamber of Commerce for cozy lodging, a good meal, and a great t-shirt; to Jean Stavenhagen for her assistance in rounding up stray newspaper articles I inadvertently left behind; and to Mary Lynn and Jerri Ann Shields of the Gabie Betts Burton Memorial Library in Clarendon for the generous use of their upstairs newspaper collection and copier. In Presidio County, I have Ann Dunlap, Lee Bennett, Jane Brite White, and the staffs at both the Marfa Public

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graduate school and parenthood; Dr. Sylvia Hoffert, for tolerating—and, hopefully, continuing to tolerate—my evolving questions about women’s history, feminism, and gender; and Dr. Walter L. Buenger, for supporting my efforts to obtain funding for my research, and for challenging me to elevate my thinking about this project. Finally, I would not be an aspiring historian without the influence of Dr. Arnold P. Krammer. It was more than ten years ago that I stumbled into one of his seminars as a floundering undergraduate, and his incomparable teaching ability awakened me to a world I had not known. I will be forever grateful for his influence; he has been a steadfast source of professional and personal support, and I regard him as a colleague, a mentor, and a friend. It is to him that I owe my professional career, and whatever successes I may encounter along the way.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines the women who campaigned for equal suffrage throughout the rural communities of Texas. The rural suffrage movement has to date remained almost completely ignored by historians of both the suffrage movement and the Progressive era in Texas.¹ They have instead developed a fairly exhaustive understanding of the movement in the cities, including key figures in the leadership of the Texas Equal Suffrage Association (TESA), notably Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Jessie Daniel Ames, and Jane Yelvington McCallum.² Federal census data, however, indicate that as late as 1920, rural inhabitants comprised nearly seventy percent of the total population of the state, numbering over 3.1 million. Local suffrage activism among the majority of Texas women therefore remains unrepresented in the literature, and with it an understanding of the woman suffrage movement as a statewide phenomenon. Though few historians have acted upon this deficiency, at least one acknowledges it.

This dissertation follows the style of the *Journal of Southern History*.

¹ The lone treatment of local suffrage organizations in rural Texas is Jennifer Baugh Hancock, "Society Suffragists: Women's Struggle for the Ballot in Rural East Texas" (M.A. thesis, Stephen F. Austin State University, 1999).

² See Judith N. McArthur and Harold L. Smith, *Minnie Fisher Cunningham: A Suffragist's Life in Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 8-88; Janet G. Humphrey, ed., *A Texas Suffragist: Diaries and Writings of Jane Y. McCallum* (Austin: E. C. Temple, 1988); and Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching*, revised edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 1-45.

Over a decade ago, Elizabeth Hayes Turner called for an abandonment of the “lofty altitudes of state and regional politics” in order to examine “the rise as well as the role and function of *local* suffrage societies in the South—to try to discover if, in fact, the grass had any roots, and if so, how healthy they were, and whether they advanced or held back the greening of the general suffrage movement.”³

In this study, I argue that the grass of the woman suffrage movement in rural Texas had no roots. No sustained indigenous interest in the campaign for equal suffrage existed in any of the nine counties considered in this study. Whatever public enthusiasm for suffrage reform did exist had to be continually resuscitated by regular infusions of speakers and literature from the state organization; wherever that attention lapsed, local interest desiccated. Instead, the success or failure of the benchmark suffrage initiative—a 1919 referendum to amend the state constitution and eliminate gender barriers to voting—depended almost entirely political, cultural, or economic concerns specific to each community, county, and region.

Despite the occasionally lofty rhetoric of the movement’s leadership, who employed a diverse array of arguments rooted in domesticity, gender equality,

³ Elizabeth Hayes Turner, “‘White-Gloved Ladies’ and ‘New Women’ in the Texas Woman Suffrage Movement,” in *Southern Women: Histories and Identities*, ed. Virginia Bernhard, et al. (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1992), 155-156, 129-130. Elna C. Green has more recently affirmed the persistence of a “nearly exclusive attention on the state and regional leadership of the southern suffrage movement,” and the “distorted picture of suffragism in the region” such myopia has produced. Rejecting claims that the traits of the movement’s leadership defined all suffragists, Green argues instead that local suffrage activists were “more typical.” See Elna C. Green, *Southern Strategies: Southern Women and the Woman Suffrage Question* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), xvii.

republican ideology, race and ethnicity, and natural rights, Texans embraced equal suffrage more in reaction to the threat to good government manifest in James E. Ferguson's post-impeachment gubernatorial campaign than as an expression of political propriety. In fact, the counties included in this study, each from different regions of Texas, reveal that the women generally considered to be the backbone of the suffrage movement—white, middle-class clubwomen—almost universally rejected the ideas of the suffragists out of hand, preferring instead to remain complicit in the prevailing patriarchal culture, and to preserve the social capital afforded by marriage, wealth, and refinement.

Nine counties comprise the focus of this study: Anderson, Brazos, Cameron, Donley, Lamar, Lampasas, Presidio, Wharton, and Wilbarger. I selected these using three criteria. First, each county represents a major geographical region of the state: East Texas (Anderson), Central Texas (Brazos), Rio Grande Valley (Cameron), Panhandle (Donley), Northeast Texas (Lamar), Hill Country (Lampasas), West Texas (Presidio), Gulf Coast (Wharton), and North Central Texas (Wilbarger). Second, I used federal census data to establish a continuum of rural/urban mixtures, ensuring that the proportion of urban residents never exceeded fifty percent; the urban concentrations in these counties range from zero to forty-six percent. This permits consideration of the influence of a growing urban culture on the dynamics of suffrage activism in and around those communities. Finally, I cross-referenced these criteria with the largest correspondence files available for rural counties in the papers of Minnie Fisher Cunningham and Jane McCallum. As with any sample, my approach has limitations—

namely the appearance that local events occur independent of activity in neighboring communities and counties. Where appropriate, I have tried to incorporate activity in surrounding areas to compensate for this shortcoming. Where the evidence did not present useful information beyond the counties I employ, however, I have not attempted to reconstruct events there.

“Rural” remains a highly subjective term, and additional census statistics have informed my classification of each county as such. First, in all but three of the counties, farmland consumed over seventy percent of county acreage; Presidio County (49.7%) was dedicated almost entirely to ranching, while both Wilbarger (47.9%) and Wharton (61.6%) were in the 1910s in the midst of an economic transformation from ranching to staple crop agriculture. Second, of the farming acreage, in eight counties better than half of the land was occupied farms 175 acres or smaller—Presidio was the exception. Third, tenancy statistics reveal a still-incomplete process of land concentration in early twentieth century Texas. By 1920, owners operated no more than fifty percent of the farms in any county, with the mean percentage of owner operation in all nine counties at forty-two percent. Finally, in terms of county productivity, agricultural output dominated every county regardless of urban/rural concentration. The lowest ratio of value of agricultural products to value of manufactured products in all nine counties was in Anderson County at 120:1.⁴ Cumulatively this data suggest counties invested heavily in the interests of agriculture, while still in a state of transition from subsistence to

⁴ University of Virginia Geospatial and Statistical Data Center Historical Census Browser, <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html>, U. S. Census of Population and Housing, 1920 (accessed February 4, 2006).

commercial operation. Under these circumstances, I find it highly likely that the “rural sensibilities” characterized by engagement in and a concern for independent small farming continued to influence the social relations and political culture of each county in this study.

In several respects, the suffrage movement in rural Texas mirrored the experience of metropolitan suffragists, and reflects a profile established by historians of the movement in both the South and the nation at large.⁵ Rural suffrage activism was foremost a town-based phenomenon, with the leadership in each county occupying the ranks of the social elite in the county seat. The women who led the movement were universally white, of the “white-gloved” persuasion, active in civic and church groups and frequently married either to educated, professional men active in law, medicine, sales, or finance, or else to agricultural elites. Leaders were often marginally younger than their fellow suffragists, and usually enjoyed the benefits of higher education. Rural suffragists embraced both the strategic and tactical methodology of their urban counterparts, mainly because they were directed to do so by TESA, which in turn received its marching orders from the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA).

Critical factors, however, distinguish the efforts and experiences of rural suffrage activists from their urban counterparts. First, whereas in the cities a post-Civil War organizational culture among women stimulated the emergence of a coherent suffrage

⁵ Elements of this profile are found in Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, *New Women of the New South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 39; and Green, *Southern Strategies*, 15-17.

movement after 1910, the organizational culture among rural Texas women failed to do so. Historians have documented well the participation of southern women in voluntary benevolent associations commonly associated with evangelical Christianity. Anne Firor Scott has described women's participation in the aid societies maintained by the Baptist and Methodist churches, both of which dominated the southern Protestant community in congregational size and cultural influence. Despite each denomination's "extremely conservative" doctrine towards women, missionary societies became a vehicle for public battles against alcohol, poverty, and the ills of urban life, projecting woman's influence beyond the home and thus taking "the essential first step in the emancipation of thousands of southern women from their antebellum image of themselves and of 'woman's sphere.'"⁶ Emboldened by their evangelical experiences, women migrated into secular groups active in civic improvements, and from these into organized suffrage activism.

Epitomizing the secular organizational culture emergent among southern women at the turn of the twentieth century was the Woman's Club. Meagan Seaholm has examined the white Woman's Club movement in Texas to discover that, although many

⁶ Anne Firor Scott, *Making the Invisible Woman Visible* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 198-202. Scott and Jean Friedman have chronicled the emergence of the evangelical women's culture in the South after the Civil War, noting wholesale changes in work and the effects of Reconstruction that dealt severe blows to the antebellum cultural patriarchy. Participation in denominational aid societies laid the groundwork for the emergence of a coherent secular women's organizational culture. See Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 80-102; Scott, *Making the Invisible Woman Visible*, 190-198; and Jean E. Friedman, *The Enclosed Garden: Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 110-120.

clubwomen remained skeptical of the value of suffrage as a means of achieving their organizational goals, the movement and the attendant respectability of its participants “indisputably” laid the groundwork for public acceptance not only of equal suffrage, but also of a new professional class of women located around the ideology of “social guardianship.”⁷ Judith N. McArthur, who has pioneered the effort to apply the idea of an evolving woman’s organizational culture to Texas, demonstrates the means by which women used secular organizations to project their “feminine” authority into public space. By embracing “domestic sciences” such as home economics, and by pursuing public projects such as libraries and rest rooms for women on the periphery of rural counties, women gained public credibility as “municipal housekeepers” and could thus challenge the “patriarchal, evangelical culture that discouraged the formation of independent women’s networks among the white middle class” without threatening directly the prevailing gender hierarchy. Woman’s clubs, moreover, by requiring members to organize mass meetings, solicit donations, maintain member rolls, craft constitutions, and elect officers, sharpened the political acumen that hundreds of women would later employ in the suffrage campaign.⁸

Rural Texas women experienced the migration from an evangelical organizational culture into a secular one. In fact, the experiences suffragists gained in

⁷ Meagan Seaholm, “Earnest Women: The White Woman’s Club Movement in Progressive Era Texas, 1880-1920 (Ph.D. dissertation, Rice University, 1988), 502, 512, 521-555.

⁸ Judith N. McArthur, *Creating the New Woman: The Rise of Southern Women’s Progressive Culture in Texas, 1893-1918* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 7-30, 76-109.

evangelical aid societies informed the method with which they attempted to reach farmwomen on the periphery of their counties. Rather than attempting to draw women to the county seat for suffrage meetings and speeches, town suffragists in rural counties employed a political outreach reminiscent of their church work, traveling to every hamlet and village in the county to deliver their message in familiar surroundings. In nearly all of the nine counties that comprise this study, however, the final transition from civic improvement associations to organized equal suffrage activism failed to occur. Whether objecting to the idea of equal suffrage on principle, or loath to risk the considerable social capital allocated to members of the local socio-economic elite, rural clubwomen refused to engage publicly in the active pursuit of electoral reform. Although the leadership of the suffrage organizations in each county also participated in club work, and although TESA speakers typically inspired brief flurries of interest among their peers, that enthusiasm quickly yielded to apathy and inertia among the vast majority of rural clubwomen. The workers that urban suffragists leaned heavily on to distribute literature, arrange speaker venues, mobilize their friends and neighbors to register, and maintain a steady supply of funding for both the local and state organizations never materialized in rural Texas.

In the absence of a supportive women's organizational culture, local factors determined the political outcome of the equal suffrage campaign, particularly the 1919 referendum. In some counties, the tenacity and resourcefulness of the leaders of the local suffrage organizations—who pursued every organizational objective virtually alone—sustained a measure of public interest in the suffrage cause. Demographic trends

also appear to have played a role: counties settled predominantly by Eastern and Midwestern Protestant Anglo immigrants during and after Reconstruction appear to have received equal suffrage more readily than those counties settled by black and white southerners in the antebellum era. In one case, Cameron County, the intersection of changing demographics, local politics, and race may have influenced the outcome of the suffrage vote, as Anglos recently arrived from the Midwest sought to break the power of Democratic Party boss Jim Wells' political machine and the multitude of Mexican *peones* that sustained it. In some counties, the cultural dynamics of frontier life coupled with the exigencies of a ranching economy informed gender relations among rural Texans. In still others, the influence of local institutions of higher learning on suffragists and the general citizenry alike may have contributed to popular views of the limits of "woman's sphere."

The failure of women's organizational culture in rural Texas also nourished a schism within each community of women between the clubwoman, who represented "respectability without controversy" and remained content with the patriarchal status quo, and the New Woman, who embraced modernity, notions of gender equality, and sought through action to "stir the southern conscience." In her study of women's culture in early twentieth century Galveston, Elizabeth Turner demonstrates that each group negotiated on behalf of the suffrage campaign a palatable public countenance: clubwomen furnished public legitimacy through their status, while New Women supplied leadership and energy. In this negotiated space, however, remained a tension

between modernity and gentility that had to be maintained gingerly if the suffrage cause were to succeed in the gendered culture.⁹

Women of rural Texas found themselves unable to maintain a similar tension for two reasons. First, the documents suggest a conspicuous shortage of “New Women” in the communities that inform this study; even if rural clubwomen had been willing to seek middle ground on the suffrage question, they had no one to meet there. Second, the suffrage issue proved inadequate to compel women of either persuasion to compromise their beliefs. Instead, New Women active in the suffrage campaign found themselves not only isolated in their work, but also resentful of the listless pace with which the clubwomen pursued change. Correspondence between local and state suffrage leaders betrays an overt hostility towards the Women’s Clubs—a subtext of the campaign neglected by the existing literature, which has thus far emphasized only the symbiosis between the two groups.

The suffragists achieved a major victory in 1918 when, threatened in the Democratic primary by the defiant candidacy of impeached governor James E. “Farmer Jim” Ferguson, acting Governor William P. Hobby signed into law a bill granting Texas women voting rights in primary elections. Far from expressing any personal conviction that women were entitled to voting rights, Hobby’s act represented instead the statutory half of a quid pro quo conceived by TESA President Minnie Fisher Cunningham. Despite the scandal of impeachment, Ferguson retained the upper hand: he had allies

⁹ Elizabeth Hayes Turner, *Women, Culture, and Community: Religion and Reform in Galveston, 1880-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 269-270.

strategically positioned both in the state legislature and the state Democratic executive committee, a matchless gift for folksy oratory, and a steadfast constituency among Texas farmers. With no real opportunity to distinguish himself as governor before the primary season began anew, Hobby was acutely vulnerable to Ferguson's personality-driven campaign. If Hobby signed the primary suffrage bill, Cunningham vowed to deliver the woman's vote to his candidacy, assuring him of tens of thousands of new voters and a broad margin of victory.

The gambit succeeded beyond the hopes of every suffragist, as more than 250,000 women cast ballots in the primary and voted by a factor of ten to one against Ferguson. This broad enthusiasm for the receipt and use of the ballot among Texas women appeared in equal measure in urban and rural regions alike. In the rural counties of this study, the number of women who both registered for and participated in the 1918 primary election startled both suffragists and observers. Given the lethargy with which rural women received the idea of equal suffrage before 1918, this sudden reversal might suggest that the suffragists' repeated attempts at persuasion had finally borne fruit. However, this anomaly is easily explained as an expression of concern more for the preservation of good government in the face of another Ferguson administration than as an epiphany about the republican virtue of gender-neutral voting privileges. In fact, given the suffragists' incorporation into their rhetorical arsenal the broad participation of women in the primary, and the accompanying interpretation of that participation as evidence of interest in the ballot, Ferguson could legitimately be regarded not only as the suffragists' greatest nemesis, but also one of their greatest benefactors.

Not that the rural movement endured only failures; in essence, the movement involved two things: securing political reform, and projecting women's influence into traditionally male-dominated arenas. The organizational culture failed to achieve the former, but rural suffragists nevertheless used the public discursive space created by their activism to blur gender distinctions and claim new sources of public authority. The most visible women in the rural campaign demonstrated political skills as refined as those of their urban counterparts, skillfully tacking from arguments predicated on gender difference and municipal housekeeping with certain audiences, to arguments grounded in natural rights and gender sameness with others. Perhaps no other venue for articulating explicitly feminist ideas proved as useful for the women themselves as the private correspondence between local suffrage leaders and the TESA leadership. In these exchanges, rural women immersed in a rigid cultural patriarchy nourished emerging ideas of gender equality without risking the social refinement that endowed the suffrage campaign with public credibility.

Probing women's organizational culture for signs of feminist consciousness is hardly novel. Karen Blair has been among the most aggressive, arguing in her study of the New England clubwoman's culture in the late nineteenth century that clubwomen were "Domestic Feminists" who purposefully countenanced public support for domesticity to camouflage their true sympathies.¹⁰ For Blair, feminism amounts to projecting woman's authority into public space while accepting limits on that authority

¹⁰ Karen J. Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1980), 1-5.

prescribed by southern patriarchy. I find this definition problematic for two reasons. First, her claim that women were rendered “economically inconsequential homebodies” by the rising salaries accompanying rapid industrialization at the turn of the twentieth century bears little resemblance to farmwomen of the rural South, who instead found themselves invested daily in labor, both agrarian and domestic, necessary for survival. Second, Blair’s argument that voluntary associations allowed women to “leave the confines of the home without abandoning domestic values,” while valid, does not, in my opinion, amount to “feminism,” which would reject distinctly feminine “domestic values” entirely.¹¹

I am instead drawn to Nancy Cott’s definition of feminism, which purports “to alter power relationships between men and women.” Cott describes three core elements: opposition to “sex hierarchy;” belief that “women’s condition is socially constructed;” and, consciousness of women as a discrete group.¹² Marjorie Spruill Wheeler’s addendum that southern suffragists who were also feminists who “had a well-developed sense of gender identification and sought to remove all of the constraints placed on women’s development *because of their sex* [emphasis original]” brings an applicable definition of feminism into sharper relief.¹³

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 4-6.

¹³ Wheeler, *New Women of the New South*, 73, n. 3.

When defined in these terms, I argue that the suffrage movement created space for feminist thought to germinate within the rigid patriarchy of rural Texas culture. None of the suffragists in this study self-identified as feminists; the language never enters the correspondence, even between women who likely took an interest in the movement on feminist grounds. Rural suffragists clearly, however, recognized the power available through the vote, and they articulated a firm understanding of the significance of that power to the advancement of women *as a group*.

Evidence of feminist and gender consciousness also appears in the mercurial relationship between the New Women and the clubwomen of rural Texas. Despite their membership in the local social elite, some of the most active local suffrage leaders did not conform to the recognized precepts of acceptable womanhood for different reasons. Kate Hunter, for example, the suffrage leader of Anderson County, took up the work in her late forties while unmarried, childless, and economically independent. Ella Pomeroy of Cameron County married a Fabian Socialist who engaged in profit sharing with the employees of his family industrial enterprise. Corinne Fullerton of Wharton County, an unmarried schoolteacher, bought several columns in the local paper to charge the male Superintendent of Wharton Schools with corruption and lying. Divorced for whatever reason from the expectations contrived for womanhood in the New South—pious, pure, domestic, and submissive—these leaders chose to risk their standing among their peers to work for suffrage reform.¹⁴ In the fact that they prioritized the highly visible pursuit

¹⁴ Barbara Welter identified the four traits of “true womanhood” for antebellum America in Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood,” *American Quarterly* 18, No. 2 (Summer 1966): 151-174. In her study of rural women in the Blackland Prairie region

of the ballot over the preservation of their status and social capital, I find evidence of feminist motivation. Even if they recoiled from complete gender neutrality, they nevertheless wrote and acted in ways that clearly demonstrate a militant attitude towards advancing the cause of womanhood, a revolutionary notion in a stringent cultural patriarchy.

These were authentic expressions of power. Lacking a supportive women's organizational culture, rural suffragists and their supporters were denied access to the homosocial network that typically allowed women to nourish iconoclastic thought in an empathetic and secure environment.¹⁵ The shifting demands of the increasingly industrial national economy and the continuing professionalization of the fields of medicine, law, education, and retail beckoned to women across the country to exchange unpaid work in the home for paid employment in the public marketplace. The menace in this development, which Gerda Lerner dates from the Jacksonian era, compelled men to find new and creative ways to limit anew women's authority—economic or otherwise.¹⁶

of Texas, Rebecca Sharpless concludes that the antebellum "southern patriarchal ideal" that defined woman's place in society, household, and marriage remained fixed well into the twentieth century. See Sharpless, *Fertile Ground, Narrow Choices: Women on Texas Cotton Farms, 1900-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 35.

¹⁵ On homosociality, see Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs* 1, No. 1 (Autumn 1975): 1-29.

¹⁶ See Gerda Lerner, "The Lady and the Mill Girl: Changes in the Status of Women in the Age of Jackson," *Midcontinent American Studies Journal* 10 (1969): 5-15. Lerner focuses her argument on the class function of the new cultural ideal of the "lady," but the process she describes nevertheless speaks to an increasingly restrictive purview for American women generally.

In the South, one solution was an increasingly intransigent ideal of “southern white womanhood” that confined middle-class white women to innocuous socialization among their peers and exclusively domestic responsibilities, and then normalized that behavior as “proper.” Inhabiting a culture hostile to notions of gender equality, rural women found in their fellow suffragists an unconventional means by which they could explore ideas that their peers would find threatening and alienating.

In doing so, rural suffragists extended a private, homosocial culture beyond the bedrock of kin and peer to include relationships created exclusively in relation to the campaign for the franchise. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, in her landmark 1975 essay, has identified a unisex culture in which women eagerly shared their most intimate feelings, “confident that other women had experienced similar emotions.” Men were shut out of this world as Others, thereby creating “a milieu in which women could develop sense of inner security and self-esteem.” Insulated by absolute empathy, women found “status and power in the lives and worlds of other women” that was otherwise denied them by masculine control.¹⁷ The discussion of politics and feminist ideas through an expanded homosocial network created specifically by the suffrage campaign represents more than a mere projection of the private into the public; it constitutes an active claim on public space, and the subsequent incorporation of that space into women’s private realm.

These new insights permit some broader conclusions about both the changing nature of women’s culture in rural Texas, and the character of rural thought in the

¹⁷ Smith-Rosenberg, “The Female World of Love and Ritual,” 14.

Progressive era in the state. What little consideration of rural women exists in the literature on Progressivism in Texas assumes a homogeneity in which women willingly complied with the patriarchy that prescribed fixed limits on their authority. For rural suffragists, however, particularly those taking an active role in the leadership of the movement in the various counties, political activism catalyzed a process of modernization that rendered women's culture in rural Texas a mosaic heretofore unrecognized by scholars.

Texas women lived in a society undergoing dramatic economic change in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Throughout the United States, the relentless demand of industry for new sources of labor drew single and married women into the workplace in unprecedented numbers. Although the "feminization" of the national workforce occurred only at a moderate pace before World War I, the success of American women in business and other forms of work reshaped popular expectations for middle-class women. Participation in business offered women a vehicle into the public sphere, and women's success in commerce engendered changes in education whereby girls began training for occupations and careers. While expectations of domesticity continued to inform gender relations throughout the country—albeit more pronounced in the South—the economic autonomy given women by paid work encouraged women to think about other ways to engage the public sphere.¹⁸

¹⁸ Julia K. Blackwelder, *Now Hiring: The Feminization of Work in the United States, 1900-1995* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 89-95.

In the South these trends were muted, as the agricultural economy perpetuated the dominance of wage work for women, particularly white farmwomen, and limited opportunities for public commercial success. Nevertheless, women in Texas experienced a similar metamorphosis, whereby increasing numbers of women secured paid work outside the home. Though Texas women lagged behind the other states of the former Confederacy in the percentage of women in the workforce before 1900, by 1920 they had not only narrowed the gap, but had surpassed the others in the percentage of women employed in white-collar positions.¹⁹ Poor white and black women in Texas were far more likely to consider daily work an integral part of their lives than middle-class white women, but the emerging presence of women in the workplace, accelerated dramatically after 1917, gave women cause to challenge the limits imposed on them by a gendered power structure.

The counties in this study provide clear linkages between suffrage activism and paid work, as local leaders like Kate Hunter of Palestine, Corinne Fullerton of Wharton, Lillian Bailey of Marfa, and Hettie Hefner of El Campo all maintained regular paid jobs as teachers or business owners. Emboldened by their business acumen, they were not intimidated by the prospects of translating their economic autonomy into the political arena. Walter Buenger argues that Northeast Texas demonstrated a political, cultural, and economic fluidity more demonstrative of modernity than previously recognized.²⁰ Similarly, the embrace of feminist ideals manifest among local suffragists in remote

¹⁹ Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry*, 25.

²⁰ Walter L. Buenger, *The Path to a Modern South: Northeast Texas between Reconstruction and the Great Depression* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), xv.

areas of Texas demonstrates that a process of cultural modernization for women in rural Texas was ongoing before 1920. Much like their counterparts in the Northeastern United States, rural Texas women were challenging the boundaries of the domestic sphere, and employing innovative and creative ways to develop modern thoughts about the purview of women beyond that sphere. The caricature of the Southern “true woman” dominating the rural landscape bears little resemblance to the communities of rural Texas, where New Women, far from surrendering to patriarchal expectations, managed to establish a foothold for feminist consciousness and more fluid gender limits within a traditional culture.

CHAPTER II

WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN RURAL TEXAS

Women in rural Texas participated in an array of evangelical and secular benevolent associations which, though less dense than those of metropolitan women, forged social networks and group identity. Few historians of American or southern women dispute the notion that the benevolent association, by cultivating the skills future suffragists would employ in pursuit of the ballot, played a critical role in the evolution of women's organizational culture into organized suffrage activism. In this capacity, the benevolent associations of the counties comprising this study not only prepared women for activism in the public sphere, but also produced local campaign leaders. In urban Texas, the machinery and membership of these networks transferred easily into a sustainable organized suffrage movement after 1913. In rural Texas, however, despite the existence of similar networks, what organized suffrage activism did appear after 1914 rarely linked fully to the existing organizational culture of rural women.

In order to establish the economic, political, and cultural environment in which rural suffragists had to function, below I have briefly supplied essential demographic, economic, and political information about the nine counties that comprise this study. I have given particular emphasis to the county seat, as the Texas Equal Suffrage Association predicated its campaign strategy on the organization of sympathetic women there. Where sources permit, I have also included a description of the women's organizations of the early twentieth century, and biographical details of women who would emerge after 1914 as activists in the equal suffrage movement.

Anderson

Anderson County and the community of Palestine by 1900 had evolved somewhat away from their antebellum agrarian origins, where immigrants from the Deep South and Missouri transferred plantation agriculture to the fertile soil of the region, cotton held sway over the local economy, and black slaves—and later freedmen—comprised a third or better of the county population. The arrival of the International and Great Northern (IGN) railroad in 1875 brought wholesale changes to Palestine, introducing new forms of commerce and working-class elements alien to the burgeoning community. Commercial centers slowly grew around the IGN depot, where the railway located its maintenance headquarters, thereby facilitating an economic transition away from an agricultural to an industrial economy. Despite these changes, however, Palestine remained a town acutely conscious of its antebellum heritage, where the residents “continued to think in terms of Dixie even into the new century.” No doubt this contributed to the persistence of cotton agriculture in the face of industrial change, but likely also maintained fertile soil in which the deeply planted roots of the antebellum patriarchy could grow and flourish.¹

Organizational life among the women of Anderson County revolved around the Palestine Self Culture Club, organized in 1894 and among the first woman’s clubs in Texas to join the Texas Federation of Women’s Clubs (TFWC) in 1898. Guided by

¹ *Handbook of Texas Online*, s. v. “ANDERSON COUNTY,” <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/AA/hca1.html> (accessed November 5, 2005); Carl Avera, *Wind Swept Land* (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1964), 67-70.

Anna J. Pennybacker, the future President of the General Federation of Woman's Clubs, from the "Magazine Club," the Self Culture Club was one of several active in the county, including the Derthick Musical-Literary Club, the As You Like It Club, the Acorn Club, Wednesday Club, Shakespeare Club, Stratford Club, Dixie Club, and Bay View Club—all of which followed the Self Culture Club's lead in organizing a city federation. The Self Culture Club restricted membership to twenty, making it the most coveted of all the woman's organizations in Palestine. Bid by the TFWC to pursue a free local library, the Self Culture Club hosted a public book reception, the price of admission to which was one bound volume. The event was an "unqualified success," and contributed to the opening of a Carnegie Library in Palestine.²

Among the charter members of the Self Culture Club was Mary Kate Hunter, who succeeded Pennybacker as president of the organization in 1897. The daughter of attorney Nathaniel Hunter, who served for years as counsel to the International and Great Northern (IGN) Railroad—after 1875 the economic lifeline of the community—and Jane Armistead Beeson, Kate Hunter spent her youth in Palestine, attending the Palestine Female Academy and other Texas private schools before enrolling in the Sam Houston Normal Institute in Huntsville for a year. The entry of the IGN Railroad drew countless new immigrants eager for a job into Anderson County, which in turn stimulated a need for a public school system in Palestine, and in 1888 supplied Hunter with her first job as a teacher. After two years, Hunter moved to Mexia to continue

² Avera, *Wind Swept Land*, 62, 64; Bonnie Woolverton, "Miss Mary Kate Hunter," private collection, 3; Pauline Buck Hohes, *A Centennial History of Anderson County Texas* (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1936), 204, 217-218.

teaching. Unfulfilled, she left her post after two years, possibly because of health concerns, to train as a piano instructor, a passion that would consume the balance of her professional life.³

She embarked upon years of training to prepare for her chosen career. Beginning her courses in the Amendi School of Palestine, Hunter traveled to Chicago, and then Boston to train in the Faelton Pianoforte School. In 1907, Hunter journeyed to Berlin, where she studied for with Madame Carrie Elyau. In 1921, she returned to Chicago and studied at the American Conservatory with instructor Josel Lhuiune. Hunter pursued excellence in piano even later in life; in 1929, entering her early sixties, Hunter traveled to Denver to take instruction from John Powell in the Denver College of Music.⁴

Hunter regarded herself as the product of “fighting stock,” with ancestors engaged in colonial wars, the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and the Civil War. Accordingly, Hunter’s organizational experience extended beyond literary and civic clubs, and into patriotic societies that later proved generally hostile to the question of woman suffrage, including the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, Daughters of 1812, and the Daughters of the American colonists.⁵

³ Woolverton, “Miss Mary Kate Hunter,” 2-3; Manuscript “Biographical Information for the Texas State Historical Association Files,” Nov. 1944, MKH, microfilm reel 3.

⁴ Woolverton, “Miss Mary Kate Hunter,” 3.

⁵ Texas Federation of Woman’s Clubs History Questionnaire, n. d., MKH, microfilm reel 3. Elna C. Green addresses the antisuffrage inclinations of southern patriotic societies, namely the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), in *Southern Strategies: Southern Women and the Woman Suffrage Question* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1997), 71-72. Hunter was not a member of the UDC.

She was a prolific writer; from 1897 to 1898, Hunter edited a society page in the Sunday *Daily Advocate* of Palestine, and founded in 1899 an eight-page society and review journal entitled *The Observer*.⁶ In many respects, Hunter epitomized the rural social elite: educated, intellectually curious, ambitious, and refined. However, Hunter distinguished herself from other “true women” of Texas by remaining unmarried, childless, and self-employed.

Brazos

“Rivers, railroads, and Texas A&M” sustained Brazos County at the turn of the twentieth century, when the region began to emerge from several decades of tumultuous change. The county remained sparsely populated through the 1850s; slaves comprised thirty percent of the population, as subsistence and small-market agriculture defined local life. The construction of the Houston and Texas Central Railroad to Millican in 1860, however, sparked a transformation in the county. Rates of settlement increased gradually but steadily; by 1870 the population of Brazos County had more than tripled. Residents voted in 1866 to establish a new county seat alongside the rail line, founding Bryan to replace the former county seat of Boonville. Opportunity and flight from disease drew Millican and Boonville residents to the new community, where rail traffic brought problems emblematic of a boomtown environment and accelerated growth. Violence, lawlessness, and vagrancy all marred the Bryan cultural landscape, generating

⁶ Avera, *Wind Swept Land*, 62; Woolverton, “Miss Mary Kate Hunter,” 4; Manuscript “Mary Kate Hunter,” n. d., Mary Kate Hunter Papers (Special Collections Division, Palestine Public Library, Palestine, Texas; hereinafter MKH), 1.

concern enough for residents to locate in 1871 the new campus of the Agricultural and Mechanical College some five miles to the south.⁷ The addition of the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe and the Hearne and Brazos Valley Railways to the county after 1880, along with the arrival of the IGN in Bryan in 1900, fueled further economic and population growth.⁸

With freedmen comprising forty percent of county population in 1870 and stabilizing at slightly over forty-five percent by 1910, race informed a tumultuous era in county politics to 1900. After 1867, the deposition of ex-Confederates from local offices during Congressional Reconstruction stirred racial hostility among local whites, most of whom either descended or immigrated from the Lower South. Blacks filled local office and kept the Republican Party afloat in county elections until 1890, when local white Democrats disenfranchised them through a "White Man's Campaign" similar to white primary movements elsewhere. By 1900, the county had been restored solidly to the Democratic Party, which would remain the only viable political entity for decades thereafter.⁹

Emancipation after 1863 created labor problems for local farmers, and emerging

⁷ Paul D. McKay, "An Introduction to a Rich Past, Bright Future," in *Brazos County History: Rich Past-Bright Future*, ed. Glenna Fourman Brundidge (Bryan, TX: Family History Foundation, 1986), 4-5.

⁸ *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "BRAZOS COUNTY," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/BB/hcb13.html> (accessed January 19, 2006).

⁹ Ibid; Paul McKay, Olivia Banks, and Mell Pruitt, "Black History," in *Brazos County History: Rich Past-Bright Future*, ed. Glenna Fourman Brundidge (Bryan, TX: Family History Foundation, 1986), 104-105.

conditions of recession after 1870 led to demographic change in the county. The county made an earnest effort to attract Europeans, including the formation of an “Immigration Society” in 1880. An Italian steamship line placed an agent in Bryan, and by 1890, Brazos County boasted “the largest agricultural colony of Italians in the nation.” Other European groups drawn to Brazos County after 1880 were Germans, Austrians, Czechs, and Poles, who found their agricultural customs easily transferred to the county’s rich land. A small percentage of Hispanics also immigrated to the county between 1880 and 1910. Although native white southerners continued to hold a slim majority in the county, by 1900, Europeans comprised fourteen percent of the county’s white population.¹⁰

Through the turn of the twentieth century, cotton increasingly dominated county agriculture. About half the farm acreage was usually allotted to corn, the second major crop in the county. The county also followed the general Southern pattern of large numbers of small farms, many of them worked by tenants and sharecroppers. The number of farms increased from 666 in 1870 to 2,613 by 1900, sixty percent of which were worked by mainly black tenants and sharecroppers; these trends would continue until 1920, when county tenancy reached its zenith at sixty-four percent. Livestock also emerged after 1860 as an important part of the agricultural economy, as county ranchers bred cattle, hogs, and sheep in growing numbers.¹¹ Manufacturing in Brazos County

¹⁰ Andrea Miller, et al., “Migration and Settlement Patterns in Brazos County,” in *Brazos County History: Rich Past-Bright Future*, ed. Glenna Fourman Brundidge (Bryan, TX: Family History Foundation, 1986), 7-15.

¹¹ Victor H. Treat, “Brazos County Agriculture,” in *Brazos County History: Rich Past-Bright Future*, ed. Glenna Fourman Brundidge (Bryan, TX: Family History Foundation, 1986), 65-73.

played no substantive economic role until the 1910s; by 1920, Bryan hosted nineteen local manufacturing establishments, with an annual production value of approximately \$1.65 million. Conversely, agricultural output value grew from \$2.2 million to \$2.8 million over the course of the same decade. Farms remained small, with most under 100 acres, and by 1920, over ninety percent of all Brazos County farms were operated either by share tenants or croppers.¹²

In addition to a vigorous evangelical associational life, women's organizational culture in Brazos County centered on the Bryan Woman's Club, established in 1895 as the Mutual Improvement Circle, but renamed in 1909 and affiliated with the TFWC. Early contributions to the community by the Woman's Club included the founding of the Carnegie Public Library in Bryan in December 1903. In 1902, the leaders of the Mutual Improvement Circle had direct access to Andrew Carnegie through one of its members, and through this connection secured Carnegie's personal pledge of ten thousand dollars for the construction of a free library in Bryan. The women maintained the library grounds and supplied books for its shelves. They also founded the Civic Improvement Association to maintain the courthouse lawn and improve landscaping in local parks.¹³

¹² University of Virginia Geospatial and Statistical Data Center Historical Census Browser, <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html>, U. S. Census of Population and Housing, 1920 (accessed September 16, 2003).

¹³ Shirlireed Walker, "Community Histories: Towns Past and Present," in *Brazos County History: Rich Past-Bright Future*, ed. Glenna Fourman Brundidge (Bryan, TX: Family History Foundation, 1986), 30; Clara Mounce, "Libraries," in *Brazos County History: Rich Past-Bright Future*, ed. Glenna Fourman Brundidge (Bryan, TX: Family History Foundation, 1986), 164; Edward Madeley, "Lodges and Civic Organizations," in

The Bryan Woman's Club became an organization of renown among clubwomen in Texas thanks in part to the leadership of Pattie Sims, wife to Confederate veteran Milton Walker Sims and mother of four. A member of the leisure class and the Bryan elite, Sims was a refined, traveled woman and a powerful presence among her peers. As an officer in the TFWC after 1902, her influence typically guaranteed the election of candidates she supported for executive positions.¹⁴ According to one contemporary, Sims was "the epitome of culture and refinement, and the Bryan Woman's Club, as one of the predominant interests of her life, reflected these qualities so strongly exemplified in her character."¹⁵

Cameron

In 1900, Cameron County teetered on the cusp of economic and demographic changes that would transform life throughout the Valley. Initially settled in 1848, the county prospered from trade by virtue of its location at the mouth of the Rio Grande. Merchants profited antebellum by shipping goods to Brownsville and then smuggling them across the river to avoid Mexican duties. An influx of commercial and migratory transients fueled rapid population growth in the county, which numbered over eight thousand inhabitants by 1850. After an economic surge during the Civil War, during

Brazos County History: Rich Past-Bright Future, ed. Glenna Fourman Brundidge (Bryan, TX: Family History Foundation, 1986), 176-177.

¹⁴ "Bryan Woman's Club," n. d., Vertical File "Woman's Club," (Carnegie Center for Brazos Valley History, Bryan, Texas), 3; Stella L. Christian, ed., *The History of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs*, 2 Vols.(Houston: Dealy-Adey-Elgin Co., 1919), 1: 81-392.

¹⁵ "Bryan Woman's Club," 3.

which Confederate blockade-runners moved cotton and other supplies through Brownsville, the county began to stagnate for lack of a railway connecting north. After more than doubling its population between 1860 and 1880, Cameron County suffered a slight decline in the following decade. Ranching emerged as the foundation of the local economic and political life, with corn and other vegetable farming trailing a distant second.

With a county population evenly split between Anglos and Hispanics, ethnic relations in Cameron County remained generally harmonious through the end of the nineteenth century. The land title disputes that informed ethnic relations antebellum remained a source of tension, but only sporadically.¹⁶ Inhabitants of Brownsville and Matamoros alike viewed one another as sister cities, and wealthier citizens of each community invested in both through commerce, real estate, and intermarriage. Ethnicity also informed the political dynamics of Cameron County, as Anglo attorney James Babbage Wells emerged after 1880 to assert his control over regional Democratic politics through a patronage system aimed at low-income Hispanics on the border. Wells traded favors for votes, and despite his resistance to reform, the institution of boss rule in South Texas supplied political stability for a generation.¹⁷ As the nineteenth

¹⁶ The State of Texas dispatched special commissioners to adjudicate disputed titles in 1852, and although they were able to resolve ownership in some instances, deceptive tactics by Anglo ranchers seeking control of the land complicated the process and, in some cases, prolonged the legal quarrel well into the twentieth century. See Armando C. Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy: Rancheros and Settlers in South Texas, 1734-1900* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 145-159.

¹⁷ The definitive work on the Wells machine is Evan Anders, *Boss Rule in South Texas: The Progressive Era* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982).

century came to a close, however, questionable land grabs by influential Anglo ranchers, including Mifflin Kenedy and Richard King, stirred ethnic tensions that would linger after 1900.

Cameron County changed dramatically after 1904, when developers built the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway through the county. Rail access to the north from South Texas fueled a twenty-year land boom, as speculators and Anglos from the Midwest deluged the Valley in search of cheap land and easy money. With the new settlers, however, came a reluctance to assimilate and ethnic hostility toward the Hispanic community. An ethnic rift widened almost immediately, as new Anglos attempted to impose white, Protestant culture on the local population, and established new communities in the county, such as San Benito and Harlingen, that served as ethnic redoubts for insurgent Anglos. Suspicion and contempt replaced cooperation as the defining dynamic of ethnic life in Cameron County, a fact only exacerbated by the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution in 1911 and the subsequent influx of thousands of Mexican refugees into the Valley.¹⁸

Donley County

With the defeat of the Cheyenne by the United States Army at Whitefish Creek in September 1874, and the subsequent relocation of the southwestern tribes into Indian Territory, the Texas Panhandle opened for Anglo settlement. Donley County was organized in 1876, but migrants came only after cattle barons Charles Goodnight and

¹⁸ Anders, *Boss Rule in South Texas*, 139-162.

John Adair established the JA Ranch in the Palo Duro Canyon. With the entire southwestern portion of the county under the control of the JA, other ranchers and settlers soon began migrating to the area. First among the immigrants was a group of Methodists from New York led by a young minister named Lewis Henry Carhart. The settlers bought 343 lots in 1878 to establish the community of Clarendon, which cowhands quickly renamed “Saints’ Roost” out of contempt for the zealous prohibitionism that defined local culture; from the inception of the settlement, all deeds of property in Clarendon contained a clause forbidding the use of liquor on the premises.¹⁹

The area developed slowly, as Clarendon remained one of only three organized settlements in the entire panhandle into the early 1880s; the county had a population of only 160 by 1880. Ranching continued to dominate the regional economy; the federal census reported seven ranches or farms in the county, albeit stocked entirely with sheep and horses. Clarendon became the county seat in 1882 as Donley organized politically. Ranchers continued to migrate to Donley County, carving commercial ranch operations out of large swaths of Panhandle prairie.²⁰

¹⁹ *Handbook of Texas Online*, s. v. “DONLEY COUNTY,” <http://www.tshe.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/DD/hcd10.html> (accessed July 13, 2005). On Goodnight and the founding of the JA Ranch, see Virginia Browder, *Donley County: Land O’Promise* (Wichita Falls, Tex.: Nortex Press, 1975), 31-64. On Carhart and the stern prohibitionism of Clarendon, see Browder, *Donley County*, 184-186.

²⁰ *Handbook of Texas Online*, s. v. “DONLEY COUNTY,” <http://www.tshe.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/DD/hcd10.html> (accessed July 13, 2005).

With the arrival of the Fort Worth and Denver City Railway in 1887, Donley County enjoyed a significant surge in population. The rail actually passed five miles from the Clarendon site, prompting the residents to pull up stakes and move the town to a new site on the tracks in October. On a vote of four to one of the “town fathers,” “Old Clarendon” was all but abandoned in 1888. With Clarendon now a rail terminus, lumber shipments for construction began arriving from Amarillo, and the town began to thrive. Over the next year a number of new shops and offices were built, and Clarendon College, a Methodist school, opened in 1887. The population swelled to over a thousand by 1890, and nearly three thousand by 1900. The county claimed 188 farms and ranches by 1900, as corn, wheat, and cotton farming became influential elements of the local economy. By 1910, the number of farms in Donley had multiplied to 601, with nearly twenty thousand acres dedicated to corn and five thousand to cotton.²¹

Organizational culture for Donley County women came primarily through the Pathfinder Club, which organized from a meeting of thirty-four women in Clarendon in January 1911. The club purported to study literature, art, and “other culture media.” Federated in April 1911, the Pathfinders sponsored artistic exhibitions, musicals, plays, and postal teas, along with the aggressive promotion of a local public library, to which the members donated books from the inception of the organization. The Pathfinders also secured and furnished a room for all of the women’s clubs in the area to meet.²² Among

²¹ Ibid.; Browder, *Donley County*, 259.

²² *Pathfinder Pilgrims*, 3 Vols. (Clarendon, Tex.: Pathfinder Club of 1911, 2003), I:1-3. See also Browder, *Donley County*, 307.

the leaders of this organization was Sarah “Tina” Stocking, a Texas native and the wife of Jerome D. Stocking, M.D., a New York native, the first trained physician in the Texas Panhandle, and the doctor, dentist, and pharmacist of Donley County. Tina Stocking had an active interest in local history, and authored several newspaper articles on the history of Clarendon and the Panhandle. She also demonstrated rather benevolent racial attitudes, rounding up some of the few black children in Clarendon and leading them in Sunday school.²³

Another Pathfinder leader who would appear in the suffrage campaign was Gabie (Betts) Burton, a schoolteacher who arrived in Clarendon after opening the second public school in Wilbarger County, Jackson Springs School, in 1887. Only a teenager, Betts taught students in a dugout in “unfavorable conditions and with . . . poor equipment.” Upon completing her teaching certificate in 1891, Betts opened the Vernon Summer Normal Institute in 1896 to train additional teachers. After a celebrated fourteen-year tenure in Wilbarger County, Betts moved to Clarendon, where she was recognized as the “best Primary teacher in West Texas,” and was hired by the Primary Department of the newly established Clarendon College in 1901. A student favorite, the bibliophilic Burton sponsored the Sappho Literary Society, and taught music and literature before resigning to marry banker Charles A. Burton in 1907.²⁴ A diminutive,

²³ Donley County Historical Commission, ed., *The History of Donley County* (Dallas: Curtis Media Corporation, 1990), 26, 84. On Jerome Stocking, see Browder, *Donley County*, 204-207.

²⁴ Wilbarger County Historical Commission, ed., *Wilbarger County* (Lubbock, TX: Craftsman Printers, Inc., 1986), 647-648, 694; Donley County Historical Commission, ed., *The History of Donley County*, 73; Ethel Harvey, *The Athens of the*

quiet woman, her contemporaries remember her as a commanding presence in any room she entered. Childless, Burton devoted her time to continued education, both for herself and others; she craved knowledge on every subject, and encouraged her peers to follow her example.²⁵

Lamar

By 1900 Lamar County was entering a sustained period of unprecedented prosperity. The area had become an epicenter of commerce in Northeast Texas; fueled by the intersection of rail and road networks linking the Four Corners region to national markets, the county seat of Paris enjoyed vigorous population growth, a broadening manufacturing sector and, even with the devastation of a massive downtown fire in 1916, a “healthy urban economy.”²⁶ Settlement in the county predated the Mexican Revolution against Spain; the first Americans arrived in the area around 1815. Population growth continued slowly through 1840, when the Texas legislature carved the county out of then-Red River County. After experiments with multiple county seats, land from the settlement of Pinhook was donated in 1844 for the creation of Paris, where

Panhandle: A History of Clarendon College (Clarendon, TX: Clarendon Press, 1958), 32-33, 67.

²⁵ Jeanice Weatherly, interview by author, Clarendon, Texas, Aug. 18, 2004; Willard Skelton, interview by author, Clarendon, Texas, Aug. 17, 2004.

²⁶ Walter L. Buenger, *The Path to a Modern South: Northeast Texas between Reconstruction and the Great Depression* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), xxi.

the county seat would permanently reside.²⁷

The earliest settlers of Lamar County descended from English and Irish roots, and, of the immigrant elements remaining in the county population by 1900, British and German inhabitants comprised the most significant minorities. The overwhelming majority, however, were native born, having migrated to Texas through Tennessee, Kentucky, and the Lower South. Despite the fact that settlers in Lamar cultivated small farms over plantations, both the county and the region remained overwhelmingly southern in its demographic composition and in its cultural practices. From a county population of slightly over ten thousand in 1860, with slaves comprising twenty-eight percent, Lamar grew dramatically to nearly fifty thousand inhabitants by 1900. Blacks made up a significant minority, with marginal foreign representation. Refugees from the Mexican Revolution after 1910 eventually introduced a Hispanic contingent to the county population, as the proliferation of cotton farming increased demand for inexpensive seasonal labor. Even with the continued urban transformation of the county seat of Paris, the county remained primarily rural in 1900, when over eighty percent of the population lived outside of the commercial center. After a slight decline in population by 1910, Lamar grew substantially over the next decade, boasting over 55,000 inhabitants in 1920.²⁸

²⁷ *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "LAMAR COUNTY," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/LL/hc11.html> (accessed February 9, 2006).

²⁸ Buenger, *The Path to a Modern South*, 141; *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "LAMAR COUNTY,"

Transportation of goods influenced the county economy almost from the beginning. Construction of short line railroads into Paris after 1887 encouraged further investment, and by 1900 Paris, together with nearby Texarkana, anchored a hub of rail connections linking Northeast Texas to Kansas City, St. Louis, Memphis, Shreveport, Dallas, Fort Worth, and Houston. Economic growth in Paris surged thereafter, and with the construction of additional rail systems and sturdy roads after 1913, the community developed into a regional wholesale distribution and cottonseed byproduct processing center. The demand for cottonseed products allowed Paris to endure the mercurial cotton market after 1914, while siphoning trade and population from surrounding communities.²⁹ Small-scale cotton farming comprised the agricultural sector of the Lamar economy, luring increasing numbers of poor white and black tenants into the area to make a run at profitability. Consolidation in ownership reduced the number of farms in the area while increasing the number of tenants, and by 1910 tenants outnumbered owners among farmers in Lamar County.³⁰

Economic trends shaped county politics. After 1900 Democrats controlled political life in Lamar County, as whites limited black political participation through poll taxes, intimidation, white primaries, and murder. Multifactionalism defined local politics from the late nineteenth century, however, and demanded the effective

<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/LL/hcl1.html> (accessed February 9, 2006).

²⁹ Buenger, *The Path to a Modern South*, 42-43, 59-60.

³⁰ Buenger, *The Path to a Modern South*, 67-68, 133.

management of political coalitions shifting around questions of prohibition, economic reform, and race. Appeals to either the black vote or the Populist vote, which surged in the region with dramatic increases in tenancy rates after 1890, remained unnecessary for political control of Lamar County; African-Americans comprised only twenty-three percent of the county population in 1900, and sustained economic growth in Paris discouraged the economic desperation that typically fueled insurgent politics. Divisions among local reformers over the liquor question created a breach exploited by conservatives to gain tenuous control of the county.³¹

Life for women in Lamar County reflected the southern inclinations of the general population, as “much of the nineteenth-century notion that men and women had separate spheres of activity lingered” into the twentieth century.³² Paris offered an array of organizational options to women, among them the Twentieth Century Club, the Good Templars temperance organization, and the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, organized in 1881 upon the visit of national W. C. T. U. President Frances Willard. Invited by self-declared prohibitionist and woman suffragist Eben L. Dohoney, Willard returned to Paris in 1882 to organize a state union.³³ After the outbreak of the 1916 fire,

³¹ Buenger, *The Path to a Modern South*, 5-38.

³² Buenger, *The Path to a Modern South*, 179.

³³ “Backward Glances,” Paris (Tex.) *Morning News*, May 14, 1935; “Backward Glances,” *Paris (Tex.) Morning News*, May 24, 1935; H. A. Ivy, *Rum on the Run in Texas: A Brief History of Prohibition in the Lone Star State* (Dallas: Privately published, 1910), 46. E. L. Dohoney articulated his views on prohibition and suffrage in Dohoney, *An Average American* (Paris, TX: Privately published, 1907), 222-231, 242-254.

Paris clubwomen “led the movement to beautify the town, to build parks, to erect monuments, and to build impressive new public buildings, including a museum and library.”³⁴

For Paris clubwomen, secular organizational culture revolved around the Lotus Club, the “pioneer of women’s clubs” in the community, the first woman’s club federated to the TFWC, and one of the three oldest clubs in Texas. A popular organization that exerted a “wholesome and powerful influence” in Paris, the Lotus Club yielded several women who would later associate themselves with the woman suffrage movement.³⁵ Among these was E. L. Dohoney’s daughter Annie—Mrs. C. I. Broad by marriage—who was a charter member of the organization; Mary Boyd, whose husband and son edited the Paris *Morning News* until 1920, who edited for years the W. C. T. U. journal, the *Texas White Ribbon*, and who in 1918 became the first woman to register for the Lamar County primary; and Nina Isabel Jennings, who wrote as the Society columnist for the Paris *Morning News* and took active roles in organizational work in both Lamar County and Texas.³⁶

Lampasas

By 1900, Lampasas County had begun to stagnate economically and culturally.

³⁴ Buenger, *The Path to a Modern South*, 179.

³⁵ “Backward Glances,” *Paris (Tex.) Morning News*, May 14, 1935.

³⁶ “Death Calls Mrs. Broad,” *Paris (Tex.) Morning News*, Jan. 27, 1936; “Backward Glances,” *Paris (Tex.) Morning News*, Feb. 9, 1933; “Backward Glances,” *Paris (Tex.) Morning News*, Jul. 4, 1954; “A Gifted Paris Lady Claimed as a Bride,” *Paris (Tex.) Morning News*, Sep. 5, 1918.

With the first settlers migrating to the area around 1853 to enjoy medicinal springs, the area drew a steady, if small, stream of migrants until incorporation in 1856. Through 1870 the region suffered from attacks by Native tribes and lawlessness, and an economy predicated on buffalo hunting and horsemanship gave way to an explosion in cattle ranching by 1875. The county lay adjacent to major drive trails to Kansas, Colorado, and elsewhere, and the number of beef cattle in the county more than doubled between 1860 and 1870. In 1882, the railroad boom that so often catalyzed settlement in rural Texas occurred in Lampasas with the extension of the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railway into the county. Tourism immediately became an integral component of the local economy, as travelers sought out the therapeutic Hannah Springs. With the closing of the open range after 1885, ranchers assumed a more scientific approach to livestock, and herds became increasingly diversified by 1900 with the introduction of sheep, hogs, and poultry. Cereals, cotton, pecans, peaches, and melons comprised the remainder of a reawakening agricultural economy. Manufacturing in Lampasas County remained relatively insignificant through 1920, with local industry functioning as little more than an auxiliary to agriculture.³⁷

The ethnic composition of Lampasas County overwhelmingly favored Anglos from Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, and other southern states; the black population—numbering 150 or so during the Civil War—halved after 1865 in response to particularly severe Native American raids. Anglos comprised well over ninety percent of the

³⁷ *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "LAMPASAS COUNTY," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/LL/hcl3.html> (accessed March 12, 2006).

county's population by 1870, and would remain so through the early twentieth century. Minor demographic fluctuations would occur after 1870, with a steady trickle of European immigrants from the British Isles and Germany, but the county otherwise remained ethnically homogenous.³⁸

Presidio

According to the United States census, Presidio County sat empty in 1850. In fact, a handful of settlers inhabited the over twelve-thousand-square-mile county, with significant settlement coming only after 1880 with the stationing of buffalo soldiers at Fort Davis, the county seat, to repel Comanche and Apache attacks. Local economic features included small farming and silver mining in the company town of Shafter until the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railway built tracks through the county. Once again, rail revolutionized the region, as a new generation of cattlemen descended upon Presidio and erected massive ranches in 1884 and 1885. That year, the county seat of Presidio shifted to the infant community of Marfa, and the county itself was carved into four other counties; the population dropped accordingly, as in 1890 Presidio numbered only 1698 residents. Ranching became an enterprise diversified between cattle and sheep, with cattle increasingly dominating the industry until 1900, when sheep ranching reached its nadir. A rebound over the next two decades revived the sheep sector of the ranch economy, and the completion of the Elephant Butte Dam on the Rio Grande permitted some increase in farming, but high-quality beef cattle breeding continued to define economic life through 1920.

³⁸ Ibid.

The ethnic composition of Presidio County reflected its location on the Mexican border, as Mexicans typically comprised no less than thirty-five percent of the county population after 1870. African-Americans were virtually nonexistent in Presidio County; in 1890, after black troops stationed at Fort Davis were lost to the partition of Presidio, only twenty-six blacks remained. The proximity of Presidio to Mexico and the needs of the ranch economy for inexpensive labor yielded ethnic relations that were at best benign; cultural exchanges did occur as Mexican ranch hands introduced Anglo ranchers and their families to new cultural practices, foods, and language, but tensions occasionally surfaced in more subtle forms after 1900. After the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution and local fear inspired by combat engagements just south of the border town of Presidio, Anglo suspicion of Mexicans increased even as Marfa residents scrambled to provide relief to thousands of incoming refugees. Mexican raids on prominent local ranches exacerbated racial acrimony, while Anglo authorities in Marfa insisted on a segregated city cemetery; Hispanics were forced continually to buy land parcels from intransigent Anglo owners to bury their dead.³⁹

Organizational life in the early twentieth century in the county seat of Marfa was rich and variegated. The community hosted several influential churches, representing the Catholic, Episcopalian, Christian, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist

³⁹ *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "PRESIDIO COUNTY," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/PP/hcp8.html> (accessed April 18, 2006). Women of the Marfa Home Missionary Society collected funds for Mexican refugees, but were discouraged by one local man from offering too much aid for fear that it would attract more of "this class" to the community. See Cecilia Thompson, *History of Marfa and Presidio County, Texas, 1535-1946*, 2 Vols. (Austin: Nortex Press, 1985), 2:105.

denominations, and each had some form of women's auxiliary to which most of the prominent local women belonged; many were charter members of their respective worship communities. Secular organizational life was equally diverse, as Marfa boasted, among others, the various war daughters' organizations, the Presidio County Club, a Park Association, the Order of the Eastern Star, the Delphian Society, the Marfa Sewing Club, a Ladies' Club, a Mothers' Club for those with schoolchildren, and a Home Missionary Club. As with most frontier communities, men vastly outnumbered women in Marfa, and thus the more prominent ladies of the community comprised the membership of most of the organizations.⁴⁰

All of these organizations, however, were peripheral to the Marfa Ladies History Club, the only literary club west of the Pecos River, and the nucleus of organizational life for the women who would lead the suffrage movement in Presidio County. Organized in September 1899 by Sarah Newton Bogel, the Marfa History Club quickly emerged as the cultural vanguard of the region, comprising the elite women of Marfa and the surrounding ranches and pursuing courses of study unusual for women's groups of the time. The field of study for the group was bold enough, as history was traditionally viewed as the exclusive purview of men. Even the motto of the organization reflected its distinctiveness: "Be Not Content to Read History—Make it." Over the course of its first two decades, the women of the History Club researched European revolution, Eastern and Middle Eastern religion and philosophy, classical

⁴⁰ Thompson, *History of Marfa and Presidio County*, 2:14-15, 45-48, 61-62, 86, 105, 174; Mrs. H. M. Fennell to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Mar. 28, 1919, Folder 110, Box 8, MFC, microfilm reel 3.

Greek and Roman civilization, and war. Federated in 1911, the History Club also funded civic improvements to Marfa, including a fountain, a sundial, and a veterans' memorial for Presidio County men killed in the First World War.⁴¹

The women of the Marfa History Club engaged in local activism beyond community aesthetics and private study. Concerns about the influence of saloons in Marfa led Sarah Bogel to organize in March 1911 a local chapter of the Anti-Saloon League. The women appealed across ethnic lines, inviting women from the predominantly Hispanic border community of Presidio to participate. The women met regularly, hearing speeches from a number of women, including Hispanics—one of whom addressed the group in Spanish. On the heels of the organization of this group, Marfa held “one of the hottest contested elections ever held” in the community on March 6, in which local prohibitionists succeeded in outlawing liquor from Presidio County by a vote of 132 to 104.⁴²

The women who participated in the Marfa History Club contributed to its unique character. Among the most prominent members of the History Club and the community at large was Edward McMinn Brite, a Missouri product who arrived in Texas in 1894 to teach in the county school and to benefit from the favorable climate of the area.

⁴¹ Thompson, *History of Marfa and Presidio County*, 1:342, 2:6, 44, 112; Marfa History Club, ed., *The Years Between: 1899-1849* (Marfa, TX: Marfa History Club, 1949), 7-23.

⁴² Thompson, *History of Marfa and Presidio County*, 2:85.

McMinn met cattleman Lucas Charles Brite in 1895, and married him in June 1896.⁴³ “Eddie” Brite quickly absorbed the fundamentals of the ranching business, and Lucas Brite’s livestock and land holdings evolved into a joint managerial enterprise.⁴⁴ A founding member of the First Christian Church of Marfa and a charter member of the History Club, Brite was elected as club President three times over the course of fifty years.⁴⁵ Also serving multiple terms as president was Frances E. Fennell, the wife of banker Harold M. Fennell. A Texas native, Fennell was a good-humored, independently minded woman with a penchant for civic activism.⁴⁶ So, too, was Lillian Bailey, a two-time president of the History Club and member for thirty years. A product of Alabama and a graduate of Christian College in Lexington, Kentucky, Bailey had a head for business and owned a novelty store in Marfa which bore her name. In her limited spare time, Bailey taught Spanish classes to local residents—an indication, perhaps, of an unconventional view of ethnic relations in the community.⁴⁷

Wharton

Initially settled in 1846, Wharton remained on the periphery of civilized Texas,

⁴³ Noel L. Keith, *The Brites of Capote* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1950), 12-27.

⁴⁴ Kate Adele Hill, *Home Builders of West Texas*, reprint edition (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1970), 64-65.

⁴⁵ Marfa History Club, ed., *The Years Between*, 11, 14, 99.

⁴⁶ Debra K. Gilly, “Introducing Mr. and Mrs. H. M. Fennell,” Vertical File, Marfa Junior Historians (Marfa Public Library, Marfa, Texas), 2-5.

⁴⁷ “Tribute Service Here Thursday to Mrs. Lillian Bailey,” *Big Bend Sentinel*, Jun. 20, 1947; *Marfa (Tex.) New Era*, Apr. 15, 1911.

with settlers drifting in throughout the prewar decade from Alabama, Kentucky, Virginia, Georgia, and Mississippi. Earlier settlement patterns favored the eastern half of the county, while in the west, later immigrants to Wharton included Swiss, German, Mexican, Danish, Russian and Czech elements along with blacks and Hispanics. Despite a bounty of alluvial soil, Wharton remained small, with a population only around two hundred in the early 1880s; local farmers specialized in sugar cane, rice, and cotton, while commercial enterprises reflected agrarian interests, including cattle, molasses, and sugar refining. With the introduction of the New York, Texas and Mexican Railway in 1881, and the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe in 1899, Wharton swelled from nearly 1700 residents in 1900 to over 2300 in 1920. The county seat of Wharton officially incorporated in 1902, persevering through a major fire that destroyed many of the wood-frame buildings in town.⁴⁸

The Colorado River divided the county not only into two distinct geographical regions, but into two distinct human communities as well. In 1882, a railroad camp named Prairie Switch appeared in the southern central sector of Wharton County; there the New York, Texas and Mexican Railway was switched toward its various destinations. Situated in the heart of cattle country, the “Pearl of the Prairies,” as cowboys dubbed it, was renamed El Campo in 1890 by Mexican *vaqueros*. Ranching dominated the local economy, with four ranches comprising the periphery of the

⁴⁸ *Handbook of Texas Online*, s. v. “WHARTON, TX,” <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/WW/hfw1.html> (accessed June 22, 2005); Annie Lee Williams, *A History of Wharton County: 1846-1961* (Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones Company, 1964), 10-12.

settlement, and thousands of head of cattle moved annually to market in San Antonio. El Campo remained little more than a stopover for transient cattlemen for years, boasting a population of only twenty-five in 1892. Settlers trickled in slowly thereafter, attracted to the soil and exploiting it for rice, cotton, corn, and hay, which soon became a featured export of the town. By the early 1900s, El Campo had become the second largest hay-shipping center in the country. Despite a fire in 1896 that ravaged the business district, El Campo continued to grow, and in June 1905 the town incorporated. Rice soon rivaled hay in economic influence; in 1903 the El Campo Rice Milling Company opened its doors, followed by the Broussard Rice Mills, which merged with the former in 1914, retained the name El Campo Rice Milling Company, and remains known today as ELCO. In 1900 El Campo had 856 residents, growing to 1,778 by 1910.⁴⁹

Politics in Wharton County were defined after 1900 by loyalty to the Democratic Party and race. Between 1872 and 1896, Republicans carried the county, as did third-party candidates in 1890, and Socialists in 1908 and 1912. One distinct element of the county political culture, however, appeared in the wake of growing black political and economic influence after the Civil War. The plantation system that sustained the county economy in the antebellum period was devastated by the emancipation of slaves. In the ensuing forty years, blacks outnumbered whites in Wharton County, reaching a ratio of

⁴⁹ *Handbook of Texas Online*, s. v. "EL CAMPO, TX," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/EE/hee3.html> (accessed June 22, 2005); *Handbook of Texas Online*, s. v. "WHARTON COUNTY," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/WW/hcw6.html> (accessed June 22, 2005). Additional details of the county economy are in Williams, *History of Wharton County*, 87-104, 153-163.

five to one by 1890. African-Americans enjoyed success in local elections, earning seats as county commissioners, clerks, and justices of the peace. A strong black presence also influenced the postwar county economy, as numerous businesses appeared after 1880 around the county courthouse square; eventually, a separate black commercial district evolved.⁵⁰

Unnerved by the effects of radical Reconstruction and the dramatically shifting balance of racial authority and power, local whites reacted by forming a White Man's Union Association to institutionalize white supremacy over local politics. Organized in November 1889, the White Man's Union gained over seven hundred members in its first month. Using intimidation, fraud, and violence, Wharton Anglos thereafter excluded meaningful black participation from politics from the county level down. No one could file for office without approval by the White Man's Union; the organization's constitution claimed that this was in the interest of better county government, but the group served instead as a de facto party for whites in Wharton County, exercising a "stranglehold on the local political scene." Black and Hispanic voters were able to participate in November general elections, but the Union dictated nominations for the spring primaries, which, in a one-party state, rendered the general election a perfunctory gesture.⁵¹

⁵⁰ *Handbook of Texas Online*, s. v. "WHARTON COUNTY," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/WW/hcw6.html> (accessed June 22, 2005).

⁵¹ *Handbook of Texas Online*, s. v. "WHARTON COUNTY," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/WW/hcw6.html> (accessed June 22, 2005); *Handbook of Texas Online*, s. v. "WHITE MAN'S UNION ASSOCIATIONS,"

Women's organizations flourished in Wharton County. One of the leading women's organizations in Wharton was the New Century Club, which in 1904 pursued a free library to "stimulate intellectual growth" in the community. The women rounded up second-hand volumes and convinced city leadership to accept their plan. Through public receptions, the clubwomen succeeded in securing an inventory of 1200 books and six magazines for the library by mid-1913. In early 1914, the women asked the Wharton City Council to support matching funds for a Carnegie Library. Upon approval, the women collected eight thousand dollars towards construction, only to have the project pre-empted by American entry into World War I; the Carnegie Library was never built. Equally prominent was the Mutual Improvement Club of Wharton, which organized in the 1900s and sponsored "artistic and refined" activities in town, including a local park opened in 1913.⁵²

Among the leaders of these organizations were Fannie May Barbee Hughs and Elizabeth Wooten Cline. The daughter of a prominent local judge and wife to Deputy Sheriff and later Postmaster Covey M. Hughs, Hughs enrolled at a young age in Baylor Female College, where she studied Latin and German before transferring to Huntsville Female College in Alabama, from which she earned a master's degree. A natural leader, Hughs was a small, energetic, passionate, and highly literate woman who regularly contributed columns on the TFWC to the *Houston Post* and the *San Antonio Express*.

<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/WW/vcw2.html> (accessed June 22, 2005).

⁵² Williams, *History of Wharton County*, 193-194, 202-203.

Hughs was elected President of the Fourth District of the TFWC in 1912, serving while she continued to enhance her journalistic credentials throughout the state.⁵³ Elizabeth Cline moved to Wharton in 1895 from East Texas with her husband, attorney Henry A. Cline, where she took up work in both the New Century Club and the Mutual Improvement Club. An ambitious socialite, Cline also participated in the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Texas Women's Press Club. A prolific writer, Cline was a passionate Texas historian, chronicling the history of a mission at Ysleta, and was later named poet laureate of the Texas UDC. The Clines were the epicenter of social life in Wharton, as Elizabeth Cline hosted countless teas, luncheons, debutante affairs, and other gatherings.⁵⁴

Wilbarger

Though established in 1858, Wilbarger County remained unsettled until the decimation of buffalo herds by white hunters and relocation campaigns by the United States Army drove the Comanche out of the region in the late 1870s. Ranching quickly took hold in the open plains; settlers without herds drew income through coyote pelts or a vigorous trade in buffalo bones that extended over one hundred miles eastward to Gainesville. The county was organized in 1881, and Vernon was designated the county

⁵³ "Fannie May Barbee Hughs, M. A.: Author-Journalist," Vertical File "Mrs. C. M. Hughs" (Wharton County Historical Museum, Wharton, Texas), 1-3; Donald Barbee, interview by author, Wharton, Tex., Jun. 18, 2005.

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Cline biographical essay, n. d., Vertical File "Mrs. H. A. Cline" (Wharton County Historical Museum, Wharton, Texas), 1; William A. Cline, interview by author, Wharton, Tex., Jun. 18, 2005.

seat. The population grew rapidly after 1880, stimulated in part by the arrival in 1886 of the Fort Worth and Denver City Railway. Farming and ranching grew accordingly; by 1890 Wilbarger had 720 farms and ranches, with a population of 7,092. Sheep, cattle, and poultry dominated the county economy at the end of the nineteenth century, but corn, oats, and cotton farming contributed significantly.⁵⁵

A dramatic influx of new farmers to the area propelled economic growth after 1900. Cash crop agriculture emphasizing corn, wheat, and cotton overtook a declining ranching industry; drought and other difficulties shrank the cattle population in Wilbarger from 33,000 head in 1900 to 10,000 by 1920. The expansion of cotton as the county's most lucrative crop, coupled with an increase in tenancy rates, sparked a twofold increase in the county population by 1910, and by 1920, Wilbarger recorded over fifteen thousand inhabitants. Ethnically, the population was overwhelmingly Anglo, with strong representation from Oklahoma, Louisiana, Tennessee, and other southern states. Blacks remained an almost insignificant minority, as did Hispanics or any other nonwhite ethnic group.⁵⁶

Women in Vernon faced limited choices in defining their organizational life. The lone federated club in the county was the Home Science Club, which organized in 1890 "to encourage the study of home science practical cookery and aid in civic achievement," and joined the TFWC in 1900. The leading women's organization in

⁵⁵ *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "WILBARGER COUNTY," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/WW/hcw9.html> (accessed March 3, 2006).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Vernon, however, appeared with the arrival of rancher J. H. and Rena Watts from Indiana in 1892. With cattle trails traversing the county, Vernon throughout the 1880s suffered routinely from lawlessness perpetrated by trail hands passing through town. Locals blamed liquor; Watts exploited that sentiment to create a Vernon chapter of the W. C. T. U., an organization in which Watts would later serve in leadership roles at the regional and state level. Watts was elected president of the organization upon its creation, and remained in that capacity from 1902 to 1915.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Wilbarger County Historical Commission, ed., *Wilbarger County*, 95, 511, 706-708; Torrence Bement Wilson, "A History of Wilbarger County, Texas," (M. A. Thesis, University of Texas, 1938), 95-98.

CHAPTER III

METHOD AND MESSAGE:

THE TACTICS AND RHETORIC OF THE RURAL SUFFRAGE CAMPAIGN

The greatest challenge before Texas suffragists was finding a way to convince men to give to women power they did not want to share. For nearly five years, Minnie Fisher Cunningham and her allies concluded that the best way to achieve this was to build as large a pro-suffrage constituency as possible in Texas, and use the numbers to pressure recalcitrant lawmakers in Austin. For local suffrage organizations, this objective entailed the arduous task of persuading their neighbors, often individually, not only to support equal suffrage, but to act on it by signing petitions or writing their representatives. This was bold and controversial work, and in pursuing it, suffragists risked their community standing. The prospect of engaging in open political dialogue intimidated most women, but the undertaking was particularly complex for rural suffragists. Rural suffragists faced two challenges: first, they had to find the right argument to convince their fellow town residents; and second, they had to reach out to the farm families on the periphery of the county, which generally required physically traveling to speak with and organize them.

In a culture bound by the precepts of patriarchy and alienated by women engaged in public dialogue about political questions, rural suffragists had to exercise great care in utilizing the array of arguments available to them. Suffragists sought arguments questioning the rigidity of the boundaries of woman's sphere without openly challenging the legitimacy of the sphere itself. Rationales that too eagerly endorsed the existing

gender hierarchy failed to illuminate the significance of the ballot to women, while advancing heresies such as gender equity risked alienating potential supporters. Acknowledging these limits, rural suffragists resorted most often to the claim that the woman vote would extend feminine domestic virtue into public life, an unthreatening argument that could be used indiscriminately with rural audiences. After American intervention in World War I, rural suffragists would successfully co-opt patriotism for their cause, changing the dynamics of the campaign even further. While natural rights, political equality, and even racial arguments played an occasional role in rural suffrage advocacy, the combined rationales of extending domesticity and rewarding patriotic service ultimately supplied the most effective argument for rural suffragists.

Methodologically, rural suffragists in Texas innovated very little. Most of the tactics employed in the campaign were given them by TESA, which in turn received them from NAWSA Headquarters. Organization drove the movement, as Texas suffragists labored to create suffrage organizations to campaign at the district, county, and municipal level. In rural Texas, however, this task was complicated and often thwarted by the difficulties of reaching farmwomen, who remained as a group physically and culturally isolated well into the 1930s. Surveying the women of the Blackland Prairie region, Rebecca Sharpless identifies consequences for farmwomen far removed from the county seat, which typically functioned as the economic and cultural nexus of the county. Texas farmwomen “sometimes remained at home for months at a time,” not only because of the exigencies of tending crops, children, and the household, but also because of the technological constraints imposed by restricted income. Farmwomen

cultivated limited contacts with neighbors through personal visits and the telephone, but broader social opportunities remained circumscribed by poor roads, which usually confined women to their farms. The advent of rural free mail delivery (RFD), which began in Texas in 1902, remained the only real means by which rural farmwomen could connect to the world beyond their own fields.¹

The physical barriers between rural suffragists and farmwomen generated cultural obstacles that suffragists also had to overcome to organize their counties. Farmwomen typically spent what little leisure time they found immersed in Christian scripture, driven by a profound piety that informed virtually every other aspect of rural life. According to Anne Firor Scott, the intersection of evangelical Protestantism and the cult of true womanhood crafted a message in which “the virtues of the perfect woman were [synonymous with] those demanded of the perfect Christian.” Male authorities in church and home called women to pursue an unattainable perfection as both women and believers, a moral vise that bound them in a cycle of perpetual failure. Challenging patriarchy and questioning the legitimacy of woman’s sphere became an act of sin that imposed a penetrating guilt upon women who did not maintain their place; atonement came only through renewed dedication to domesticity and submission. These precepts obtained powerfully among Texas farmwomen, and to earn their support, rural

¹ Rebecca Sharpless, *Fertile Ground, Narrow Choices: Women on Texas Cotton Farms, 1900-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 17-39, 189-195,

suffragists had to probe and question those beliefs.² As election returns from outlying precincts would reveal in 1919 and, to some degree, 1918, the suffragists did not always succeed.

The means by which rural suffragists attempted to reach rural farmwomen in their counties reflected the nature of their evangelical work; each had a missionary quality. Organization invariably began with the county seat and radiated out to the smaller communities on the periphery of each county. In Lampasas County, for example, Lee Lytton Smith and members of the Lampasas ESA traveled the county to organize Hobby Clubs in anticipation of the July 1918 primary, succeeding in the hamlets of Lometa, Rumley, Naruna, Adamsville, and McCreaville.³ A similar effort occurred in Wilbarger County in 1918, when, with the assistance of Texas W.C.T.U. Corresponding Secretary Cora B. Megrail, Rena Watts organized Hobby Clubs in Fargo, Tolbert, and other outlying communities in the span of ten days.⁴ Suffragists in Donley

² Sharpless, *Fertile Ground, Narrow Choices*, 204; Anne Firor Scott, *Making the Invisible Woman Visible* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 190-197.

³ "Hobby Friends Organized for Work," *Lampasas (Tex.) Leader*, Jun. 14, 1918; "Hobby Club Organized at Lometa," *Lampasas (Tex.) Leader*, Jun. 21, 1918; "Hobby Clubs," *Lampasas (Tex.) Leader*, Jun. 28, 1918; "Hobby Club," *Lampasas (Tex.) Leader*, Jun. 28, 1918.

⁴ "Hobby Club at Fargo," *Vernon (Tex.) Record*, Jun. 21, 1918; "Hobby Club Formed by Tolbert Women," *Vernon (Tex.) Record*, Jun. 25, 1918; "Three More Hobby Clubs," *Vernon (Tex.) Record*, Jun. 28, 1918. Watts continued to organize in the smaller towns after Megrail's departure. See "Hobby Club at White City," *Vernon (Tex.) Record*, Jul. 2, 1918; "2 New Hobby Clubs Formed by Women," *Vernon (Tex.) Record*, Jul. 5, 1918; "Suffrage Meeting at Odell," *Vernon (Tex.) Record*, Jul. 9, 1918; "Hobby Clubs in 4 County Districts," *Vernon (Tex.) Record*, Jul. 12, 1918.

and Anderson counties used similar tactics, leaving the comfort of their usual social networks to find women on the margins, and enlist their support for the cause.⁵

The suffragists' efforts brought welcome results. In Wilbarger County, a significant percentage of the female registrants for the 1918 primary election came from communities where Vernon suffragists had organized only weeks before. In 1916, the president of the Housewives' League of Tucker, a small farm community just outside of Palestine, invited Kate Hunter to speak in their church the next Sunday night. "She said they all wanted to hear about suffrage," Hunter recounted to Cunningham, "the farmers all around."⁶ In Donley County, the Hobby School of Citizenship created by the Pathfinder suffragists was "well attended by the town ladies and a good many rural ladies."⁷ In some areas, however, the interest was fleeting, as election returns from the 1919 referendum in Lampasas and Anderson counties revealed strong opposition to suffrage in the remote precincts.⁸ Even in Wilbarger, where suffrage support remained reasonably strong throughout the country, outlying precincts with strong Hobby

⁵ On the Donley strategy, see Mrs. E. P. Shelton to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, May 7, 1918, Folder 63, Box 5, MFC, microfilm reel 2.

⁶ Kate Hunter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Jun. 5, 1916, Folder 3, Box 47, JYM.

⁷ Mrs. J. D. Stocking to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Jun. 23, 1918, Folder 63, Box 5, MFC, microfilm reel 2.

⁸ "Vote on Amendments," *Lampasas (Tex.) Leader*, May 30, 1919; "Complete Election Returns," *Lampasas (Tex.) Leader*, Jun. 13, 1919; "Anderson County Votes Against the Suffrage Amendment," *Palestine (Tex.) Daily Herald*, May 28, 1919.

organizations only a year earlier rejected the suffrage referendum.⁹ The Lampasas *Leader* specifically complained in an analysis of the 1919 vote that “opposition to the proposed amendment was most pronounced in the rural districts and in the ‘back counties,’ and this properly has led to the suggestion of the need of a campaign along educational lines where the equal suffrage cause had not been pressed with sufficient energy.”¹⁰

Perhaps no tactic proved as successful for rural suffragists as the renaming of local suffrage organizations as “Hobby Clubs,” or some close variation. The resistance rural clubwomen demonstrated towards a seemingly militant notion like equal suffrage evaporated when the organizational activity became a question of good government and the defeat of Fergusonism. Nowhere was the utility of this maneuver more evident than in Anderson County. By September 1917, the suffrage movement in Palestine had all but disappeared. A disappointed Kate Hunter reported to Cunningham “the death of the Pal. Equal Suffrage Ass’n.” After a year, the suffragists had failed to muster any popular support for the work, and the organization itself had not had a quorum since February. Despite Cunningham’s reassurance that the organization had but “passed into

⁹ “Favor Suffrage Prohibition and Home Ownership,” *Vernon (Tex.) Record*, May 27, 1919.

¹⁰ “Analysing the Vote,” *Lampasas (Tex.) Leader*, Jun. 13, 1919.

an eclipse,” Hunter had “given up on the question in Palestine;” she nevertheless intended to keep up her individual efforts, despite her failing health.¹¹

When, in June 1918, Cunningham offered Hunter the chairmanship of Anderson County for the primary registration drive, Hunter declared that she already had the entire county organized into Hobby Clubs. She had appointed chairmen to every county post office, and the registration rolls were growing. Invitations had come from Rusk, Jacksonville, and Crockett, where she found an “overflowing Court House full” of women “lining up” to participate in the primary. Hunter was stunned:

Now I’m telling you all this to let you know how fruitless, as you know, my efforts for suffrage were in this district. I’ve been to places not once but several times [and] written scores of letters [and] accomplished nothing, but now that the women have the ballot I think the best suffrage work in the world is to get them to register [and] vote and I’m doing that so easily that I can hardly believe my eyes. Such is the contrast in working for the popular [and] unpopular.¹²

A delighted Cunningham replied, “it makes no difference to me whether [the groups] are called Hobby Clubs, Good Government leagues, or Suffrage leagues. ‘A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.’”¹³

¹¹ Kate Hunter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Sep. 24, 1917, Folder 50, Box 4, MFC, microfilm reel 2; Minnie Fisher Cunningham to Kate Hunter, Sep. 26, 1917, Folder 50, Box 4, MFC, microfilm reel 2.

¹² Minnie Fisher Cunningham to Kate Hunter, Jun. 7, 1918, Folder 76, Box 6, MFC, microfilm reel 3; Kate Hunter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Jun. 1916, Folder 76, Box 6, MFC, microfilm reel 3.

¹³ Minnie Fisher Cunningham to Kate Hunter, Jun. 13, 1918, Folder 76, Box 6, MFC, microfilm reel 3.

Suffragists in Donley, Wilbarger, Presidio, and Wharton Counties had similar experiences. Sarah Stocking of Clarendon struggled to mobilize local women for the cause but received no response despite repeated efforts.¹⁴ Once the primary suffrage bill passed, however, the Pathfinder women assumed a more aggressive stance, organizing a Hobby School of Citizenship in May 1918 to prepare women to “vote intelligently.”¹⁵ Stocking reported in late June that the school had been well attended; registration numbers reflected the sudden interest, as over eight hundred women registered for the primary—about half of the age-eligible women in the county.¹⁶

In Wilbarger County, the Vernon suffrage association in June 1918 took the name of “Woman’s Hobby Club of Wilbarger County” to alert county women that “we will not have Ferguson.” Inflaming the situation was the fact that the Ferguson camp had allegedly “sneaked” an ally into the county in early May to assemble a Ferguson club.¹⁷ Whatever the stimulus, reaction was almost immediate, as Wilbarger women

¹⁴ Mrs. J. D. Stocking to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Jun. 5, 1917, Folder 63, Box 5, MFC, microfilm reel 2.

¹⁵ Pathfinder Club of Clarendon, *Pathfinder Pilgrims*. Vol. I: 1911-1940, Pt. 4, “Minutes of 1916-1919” (Clarendon, Tex., 2003), 27; “Hobby School of Citizenship,” *Clarendon (Tex.) News*, May 30, 1918.

¹⁶ Mrs. J. D. Stocking to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Jun. 23, 1918, Folder 63, Box 5, MFC, microfilm reel 2; “823 Women Register for Voting in Donley County,” *Clarendon (Tex.) News*, Jul. 18, 1918.

¹⁷ Mrs. George Langley to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Jun. 23, 1918, Folder 120, Box 8, MFC, microfilm reel 4; “Women Organize Hobby Club Here,” *Vernon (Tex.) Record*, Jun. 11, 1918.

rallied to the Hobby banner; over one hundred joined the club at its first meeting.¹⁸ Mrs. George Langley noted the shift in sentiment to Cunningham: “some of the men who would not think of suffrage when I came last winter are now saying Well Done—Funny, isn’t it?”¹⁹ Registration numbers again confirmed the efficacy of this tactic, as over twelve hundred Wilbarger women—slightly over forty percent of those eligible—registered for the July 1918 primary.²⁰

Suffragists in Presidio and Wharton Counties also located their activism around Hobby Clubs. In Marfa, the women of the History Club organized a Hobby Club, which, although Hobby prevailed in the primary, was evidently thwarted by local women who were either “indifferent” or “timid about the matter of registering.”²¹ A legal challenge to the validity of the woman vote, however, galvanized members of the Hobby Club and other local women alike. The court ruling mandated a second primary, which “brought out an even stronger vote than the first one...and women voted without outward opposition.”²² In Wharton, suffragists met in May 1918 to organize their

¹⁸ “Women Organize Hobby Club Here,” *Vernon (Tex.) Record*, Jun. 11, 1918; “156 Women Join Local Hobby Club,” *Vernon (Tex.) Record*, Jun. 18, 1918.

¹⁹ Mrs. George Langley to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Jun. 23, 1918, Folder 120, Box 8, MFC, microfilm reel 4.

²⁰ “1235 Wilbarger Women Register to Vote July 27,” *Vernon (Tex.) Record*, Jul. 12, 1918.

²¹ Mrs. Charles Bailey to “Minnie Cunningham Fisher,” Jun. 21, 1918, Folder 110, Box 8, MFC, microfilm reel 3.

²² The legal challenge is detailed in Frances B. Fennell, “Episode in History,” Vertical File “Voting in Presidio County,” Marfa Junior Historians Papers, Marfa Public Library, Marfa, Texas, 1-4. The quote comes from page four.

campaign. Some balked at a name that included “suffrage,” and thus they decided to name the group the Wharton County Hobby Club. Within a week, the designated precinct chairmen had established contacts in every part of the county; the Hobby Club membership swelled into the hundreds, and by July 12, over one thousand county women had registered to vote.²³

The influence of the organization’s name upon women’s willingness to participate in the work, however accidental its discovery, became a tool consciously employed by some rural suffragists. In the wake of Hobby’s primary victory, Hunter encouraged the Hobby Club to become the Good Citizenship League in order to “get the cooperation of all women if we can.” She recognized that changing the Hobby Clubs into suffrage organizations would be “impossible,” and would “split [and] cripple their usefulness. ...It could not be done in our county, but I do believe the women will work through this League.”²⁴ Cunningham commended the strategy, agreeing that the work, not the “technicality of a name,” was paramount.²⁵

Rhetorically, suffragists in rural Texas shaped their arguments to the circumstances peculiar to their communities. Demonstrating political acumen as

²³ Ellyn Andrews to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Jul. 3, 1918, Folder 120, Box 8, MFC, microfilm reel 4; “Wharton County Women Will Support Hobby,” *Wharton (Tex.) Spectator*, May 31, 1918; “The Hobby Club,” *El Campo (Tex.) Citizen*, Jul. 12, 1918; “1217 Women Registered,” *El Campo (Tex.) Citizen*, Jul. 19, 1918.

²⁴ Kate Hunter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Aug. 29, 1918, Folder 50, Box 4, MFC, microfilm reel 2.

²⁵ Minnie Fisher Cunningham to Kate Hunter, Aug. 31, 1918, Folder 50, Box 4, MFC, microfilm reel 2.

sophisticated as their urban counterparts, rural Texas suffragists often took care to use select arguments in select company in order to ensure maximum effect. With such a rigidly conservative attitude towards women firmly entrenched throughout the state, this approach typically meant that the argument least offensive to southern patriarchy was the one most frequently employed. The evidence documenting the rural suffrage campaign reveals that rural suffragists generally employed four main premises: voting rights as a means of extending womanly virtue into public life; voting rights as an expression of political equality supplied by the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution; voting rights as a reward for patriotic service in war; and, voting rights as an expression of the inherent equality between women and men.

Voting as a means of extending domesticity and feminine virtue into public welfare issues easily proved the most compelling argument for rural Texans, and was therefore the rhetoric most commonly employed in public venues. Dubbed by Judith McArthur as “municipal housekeeping,” this argument was predicated on gender difference and often served as the primary means to advocate equal suffrage without offending an audience invested in patriarchy. Suffragists consciously and purposefully exploited the cult of domesticity, the unimpeachable virtue of woman, and the feminine nurturing function by claiming that the corruption of contemporary politics demanded a good cleaning. Unblemished by the stain of politics, women were entitled to speak on questions that influenced their abilities to maintain the home and attend to their children, including education and temperance. Aileen Kraditor identifies this position as the “argument of expediency,” which typically proved far more persuasive than the “justice

argument” that staked out a position for equal suffrage within a doctrine of natural or constitutional rights.²⁶

Municipal housekeeping also dovetailed with the evangelical and secular woman’s organizations already projecting feminine influence into public space to render the suffragists’ message far less provocative than other arguments. Through aid ministries and the women’s clubs, rural women had already earned public credibility on issues linked to the domestic purview of woman, namely, public sanitation and hygiene, education and library facilities, and temperance. It was also the most versatile argument available to rural suffragists, who employed it without regard for audience.

Corresponding with State Representative John LeGory in 1915, Kate Hunter claimed, “the woman hood of the world does not want office, they are simply asking the men to give them the privilege of helping them to make this a better world to live in. There are no isms and ologies to the question, it is that and nothing more.”²⁷ Cunningham affirmed this in a celebrated address delivered to a packed Palestine banquet hall in November 1915: “the world needs woman suffrage more than women need it.

...Woman is responsible for cleanliness, for the purity of the food set before her family.

...Would it not be common sense for women to vote from this view point?”²⁸ Among the

²⁶ Judith N. McArthur, *Creating the New Woman: The Rise of Southern Women’s Progressive Culture in Texas, 1893-1918* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 1; Aileen S. Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1880-1920* (New York: Norton & Co., 1981), 43-46.

²⁷ Kate Hunter to John LeGory, Feb. 25, 1915, Folder 1, Box 10a, JYM, Part II.

²⁸ “Suffrage Banquet Brilliant Success,” *Palestine (Tex.) Daily Herald*, Nov. 22, 1915; “Suffrage Banquet,” *Palestine (Tex.) Daily Herald*, Nov. 24, 1915.

literature distributed by TESA in 1919 was a leaflet entitled “To the Women of This State,” asking women and their husbands to support the referendum and give their children improved education, safer and more wholesome communities, and good roads.²⁹

Other rural Texas suffragists employed municipal housekeeping to convince their neighbors. Elizabeth Cline delivered an address in Wharton in 1915 on “The Woman of Tomorrow,” in which she agreed that women would likely always devote themselves to domestic needs, but envisioned a time when “the woman who chooses to vote can do so if it is for the uplift of home and children.”³⁰ In Brazos County, Pattie Sims requested suffrage literature from Annette Finnigan in December 1914 with plans to show her fellow clubwomen the role that voting could play in changing a woman’s right to custody of her children. “Nothing so quickly stir [*sic*] up resentment in a womans [*sic*] heart as the knowledge that she has not the same legal right to her children as her husband has,” Sims argued. When women discovered the inequity of current laws, she believed, “they will soon favor woman’s suffrage.”³¹

Suffrage arguments rarely functioned in isolation. In some cases, suffragists shrewdly used rhetorical linkages that left rural assumptions of gender hierarchy and domesticity intact while subtly introducing notions of political equality. In Wharton County, for example, TWSA President Annette Finnigan invoked domestic arguments in

²⁹ “To the Women of This State,” Folder 3, Box 4, JYM.

³⁰ “Feminist Movement Discussed,” *Wharton (Tex.) Spectator*, Feb. 12, 1915.

³¹ Pattie Sims to Annette Finnigan, Dec. 12, 1914, Folder 2, Box 10a, JYM, Part II.

a December 1914 address to interested locals. While introducing Finnigan, Fannie Mae Hughs assured the audience that the suffrage movement demanded “nothing militant,” but instead sought the ballot in pursuit of pure food laws, improved sanitary conditions, and defense of the home. Hughs conceded a belief in the unconstitutionality of taxation without representation, but hastened to add that suffragists had no intention of “throwing overboard the tea-box.”³² Lavinia Engle employed similar logic in a March 1916 speech in Wharton. Engle dubbed equal suffrage a “logical and just development” of the American Revolution, legitimized it within a constitutional framework, but then couched the objectives of women firmly within “matters of sanitation, pure food, magazine censorship, public play grounds, amusements, etc., for these things...indirectly affect every home in the United States.”³³ In Lamar County, suffrage lecturer Lutie E. Stearns of Wisconsin heralded in her address on “The Ideal Democracy” the “moral uplift certain to follow the enfranchisement of America’s women.” When Stearns concluded, the mostly female audience ratified a petition calling upon the state legislature to submit equal suffrage legislation.³⁴ The message that women sought the vote merely to better maintain—not rupture or escape—their sphere proved far more receptive to rural Texas voters.

³² “Votes for Women Ably Discussed,” *Wharton (Tex.) Spectator*, Dec. 11, 1914.

³³ “Suffrage Lecture,” *Wharton (Tex.) Spectator*, Mar. 31, 1916.

³⁴ “The Ideal Democracy,” *Paris (Tex.) Morning News*, Jan. 19, 1917; “Local News Notes,” *Paris (Tex.) Morning News*, Jan. 20, 1917; “Society and Club Notes,” *Paris (Tex.) Morning News*, Jan. 21, 1917.

Linking woman suffrage with the language of the American Revolution and the founding documents of the republic offered another line of reason for Texas suffragists, and one that rural activists occasionally found effective. Resolutions passed by the Lampasas ESA, for example, in May 1918 endorsed a federal suffrage amendment on the grounds that “women of this country will [never] get justice until they can vote on an equality with men.”³⁵ Following a Helen Todd speech in February 1915, the Palestine ESA resolved, “the principles of democracy [require] the submission of the Burmeister-Lewelling suffrage amendment entitling the women of Texas to vote.”³⁶ The literature given rural suffrage leaders by TESA for circulation during the 1919 referendum campaign included several appeals to political equality and constitutional rights. A leaflet entitled “Handicapped” complained that “women without votes are handicapped before the law and politically,” able only to submit petitions while “the voting class can make a mighty demand through their chosen representatives.” Without the “weapon” of the vote, women were “defenseless” and “exploited,” and therefore deserved change. Another entitled “Think It Over” identified suffrage as a “measure of liberty and justice,” while still another entitled “True Democracy,” quoted directly the Declaration of Independence and Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address before concluding powerfully, “no

³⁵ “Meeting of Equal Suffrage Association,” *Lampasas (Tex.) Leader*, May 17, 1918.

³⁶ “Great Audience Heard Miss Todd,” *Palestine (Tex.) Daily Herald*, Feb. 8, 1915. Annette Finnigan enclosed the resolution for the Palestine ESA’s approval in Annette Finnigan to Kate Hunter, Jan. 30, 1915, Folder 1, Box 10a, JYM, Part II.

state can be a true democracy in which one-half the people are denied the right to vote.”³⁷

With the entry of the United States into World War I as a belligerent in 1917, women across the nation were called to support the American war effort. Their new responsibilities supplied public exposure and credibility for rural suffragists, and the devotion they demonstrated in providing bandage fabric, planting victory gardens, canning and preserving food, organizing Liberty Loan and War Savings Stamp drives, maintaining local Red Cross auxiliaries, and even serving as medical support personnel in France endeared them to their peers. Pressed by Cunningham, who realized the publicity potential of the situation, to prioritize war work above suffrage activism, women across Texas quickly won the admiration of their communities for their selfless dedication to the needs of American troops abroad. The new public leverage proved useful not only at the local level, but also to Cunningham, who used the argument to cover Hobby politically in order to secure the primary suffrage bill in 1918.³⁸

Judith McArthur confirms that World War I “*did* alter the context of the debate to the suffragists’ advantage” in three critical ways. First, by mobilizing women as “highly visible fund raisers for the federal government,” the war “completed middle-class women’s conquest of public space, fatally weakening the old separate spheres argument against female voting.” Many women unnerved by public speaking felt

³⁷ “Handicapped,” “Think It Over,” and “True Democracy” are all found in Folder 3, Box 4, JYM.

³⁸ A full discussion of the politics of the suffrage campaign follows in Chapters IV and V.

insulated by a sense of duty in speaking on behalf of war needs. Second, the war supplied “an unparalleled opportunity to attract positive publicity.” Texas suffragists’ visible participation in patriotic efforts sculpted a more palatable image of them in the eyes of the general public; TESA Press Secretary Jane McCallum also used her Austin *Statesman* columns to draw sharp contrasts between the militancy of the National Woman’s Party in Washington and the loyalty of Texas women. The strategy brought Texas suffragists new converts and allies, driven not only by an image which contradicted the apocalyptic claims of the anti-suffrage movement, but also by the moral purity displayed by Cunningham and the TESA’s leadership of the Texas Anti-Vice Committee.³⁹

Finally, the war furnished two new rhetorical weapons to suffragists. First, the suffragists’ constitutional rights rationale received a measure of new public credibility. In entering the war, President Woodrow Wilson purported to “make the world safe for democracy.” Suffragists now argued that the disfranchisement of women “contradicted the democratic principles for which America was fighting abroad; democracy should begin at home.” The second, and markedly more persuasive to conservative rural Texans, weapon was the claim to a reward for the patriotic service of women during the war.⁴⁰ In completing their war work, women rarely violated the bounds of domesticity; their labors were nearly always related somehow to their “natural” nurturing tendencies,

³⁹ Judith N. McArthur, *Creating the New Woman: The Rise of Southern Women’s Progressive Culture in Texas, 1893-1918* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1998), 134-137.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

and thus offended none. Rural newspapers' portrayals of National Woman's Party members picketing the White House as treason served as a powerful reminder of the risks of challenging unity of purpose in wartime.

The war also created an opportunity for suffragists to capitalize on growing xenophobia in both the nation and state as a means of reconstructing their public identities in a way that subordinated gender to national identity. The archetype of Southern womanhood evolved after 1917 away from the strictly pure and domestic and toward the pure and patriotic—a transformation that proved particularly compelling for Texas legislators reluctant to embrace suffrage reform. With the introduction of bills in both Texas chambers amending the state constitution to grant women full voting rights, lawmakers cited the need to replace the disloyal alien vote with the loyal woman vote in the name of purer “Americanism.” More importantly, however, war service allowed Texans to view women less in terms of the differences created by sex and gender, and more in terms of the commonality offered by loyalty and citizenship.

Local newspapers were among the first to link the dedication shown by rural women to the war effort to their ability to execute their responsibilities as citizens. The Bryan *Eagle* sang women's praises: “Brazos County women, together with all the other patriotic and loyal women of this great nation of ours, answer ‘present’ for service...just as our American men and boys are answering every call made to them.”⁴¹ Austin Callan, the editor of the Marfa *New Era*, reminded local women in July 1918, “the flag has

⁴¹ “Our Brazos County Women are Loyal,” *Bryan (Tex.) Daily Eagle*, Jul. 27, 1917.

called many of our cleanest and best young men away. They are to fight for high and noble principles on foreign soil. You must step into their places at home and give your ballots for the same thing that they are giving their lives.”⁴² The *Vernon Record* hopefully declared in March 1918, “few political heresies can survive a war of any consequence, and it seems that this will be true of the theory that women are unfit to discharge the duties and obligations of enfranchised citizenship.”⁴³

Suffragists across rural Texas invoked patriotic appeals early and often, linking voter participation in the 1918 primary to notions of loyalty and duty. Nina Isabel Jennings of Lamar County crafted and published independently in 1918 a pamphlet entitled “You Are Called,” in which she framed participation in the July primary election “as much your precious privilege and sacred duty to answer this call at home as it is for our men to answer the call to leave home and go forth to battle for American ideals, homes, women and children.” Voting was a responsibility akin to combat; “backing the boys in France” meant establishing “loyal and efficient government at home, that the victory they buy with their precious blood shall not be sold behind their backs. ...Women of Texas, we cannot forget! We will not forget!”⁴⁴ Gabie Burton of Donley County soberly reminded women, “You may not have wanted this duty, it may have been thrust upon you, but it is yours, and the loyal American citizen meets duty

⁴² “An Opportunity,” *Marfa (Tex.) New Era*, Jul. 20, 1918.

⁴³ Editorial, *Vernon (Tex.) Daily Record*, Mar. 19, 1918.

⁴⁴ Nina Isabel Jennings, “You Are Called,” Folder 9, Box 6, JYM.

squarely.”⁴⁵ Mrs. Fernando Miller, Lampasas ESO President, asked local women to “do their patriotic duty for the sake of the boys who are giving their all for them.”⁴⁶ In 1919, Anna Kelly, a member of the Brownsville ESA, went so far as to solicit letters from American Expeditionary Force soldiers pronouncing how proud they were that “the women folks have ‘fought the war,’” and that “if women had to earn the right to vote they sure earned it during the war.”⁴⁷

Despite the stranglehold Jim Crow maintained on Texas, race played a limited role in the rhetoric of Texas suffragists, rural or otherwise, for several reasons. First, at sixteen percent of the total population, Texas had the smallest black population in the South, and with slightly more than half of eligible voting age, the demographic minority represented neither a political threat nor a useful ally. Moreover, this meant suffragists could not demand voting rights as a means of maintaining white supremacy. Second, for both personal and practical reasons, Jim Crow was one of the silent assumptions of most Texas suffragists. In 1918, for example, Wharton County suffragists successfully petitioned the local White Man’s Union, which existed solely to deny to black residents participation in county and municipal elections, to allow women to vote in local primaries; no hint of irony is in evidence. From a statewide perspective, Cunningham and TESA, whatever their personal beliefs, had little choice but to sanction segregation;

⁴⁵ “Hobby School of Citizenship,” *Clarendon (Tex.) News*, May 30, 1918.

⁴⁶ “The Equal Suffrage Association,” *Lampasas (Tex.) Leader*, Aug. 2, 1918.

⁴⁷ “Why the Amexes Are for Equal Suffrage,” *Brownsville (Tex.) Daily Herald*, May 12, 1919.

to challenge it in any way would mean instant and automatic defeat for the woman suffrage campaign.⁴⁸ Third, TESA concluded early in the campaign that ethnic minorities would vote against suffrage as a group; they planned therefore to tap the nativist anxieties growing in Texas after 1917 to secure their victory. Judith McArthur has found that “neither the TESA literature nor the correspondence of the members reveals any evidence that they argued for suffrage on racial grounds.”⁴⁹ For rural suffragists, explicitly racial arguments for suffrage were neither useful nor necessary.

While this may have been true in reference to black Texans, race and patriotism intersected after 1918 to supply a powerful message regularly employed by Texas suffragists. In what Jacquelyn Dowd Hall identifies as part of the progressive effort to “assert the cultural hegemony of a new middle class in an urban industrial world,” Cunningham called upon the TESA to exploit resentment toward ethnic Germans and Mexican-Americans to achieve the ballot. In a May 1919 instructional circular to county chairmen, Cunningham asked:

Is it not possible that when you substitute the loyal American women of this state as voters in place of the ignorant “First Paper” Mexicans on the

⁴⁸ Cunningham demonstrated some ambivalence on questions of race during the campaign, going so far on one occasion as to infer that African-Americans were entitled to voting rights. As early as 1915, moreover, TESA leaders dodged racial arguments. Speaking as outgoing president at the Galveston convention, Annette Finnigan rejected affiliation with the Southern States Woman Suffrage Conference, an explicitly racist suffrage organization led by vocal Negrophobe Kate Gordon of Louisiana, precisely because “we don’t want to bring the Negro question to Texas.” See McArthur and Smith, *Minnie Fisher Cunningham*, 48, 62-63.

⁴⁹ Judith N. McArthur, *Creating the New Woman: The Rise of Southern Women’s Progressive Culture in Texas, 1893-1918* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 109-115.

Border, who have notoriously been exploited by corrupt politicians to the confusion of justice and the shame of our state, you will be bringing to a close a very black day in our history and helping the dawn of a better day which shall see Texas on record as an “All American” state?⁵⁰

In addition, talking points supplied to poll monitors by TESA for Election Day in 1919 included claims that the suffrage amendment “gives the loyal women of Texas a voice in the Government,” and “takes away from those whose citizenship is questionable a privilege they should never have been granted.”⁵¹

TESA literature circulated for the 1919 campaign hammered away at the nativist theme. A leaflet entitled “Build a Memorial With Your Votes” asked men to vote for the amendment “whose loyalty clause politically interns those men whose citizenship status is questionable and at the same time re-enforces by an overwhelming accession the hosts now and forever dedicated to true Americanism.” Another called upon “Men of Texas” to choose “between [the] women and the alien enemies within our gates as citizens.”⁵² This message played particularly well in the areas of the state in which Mexican-Americans occupied an influential role in local political life. A. M. Avant, editor of the *Marfa New Era*, ran a piece by Texas W.C.T.U. President Nannie Webb Curtis, begging women to vote in the 1918 primary, else “our boys will return to a land already in the hands of our political enemy, a land despoiled and helpless because the barbarians, of German and German sympathy, will have elected their friends and driven

⁵⁰ Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry*, 43-44.

⁵¹ “Form of Report on Election Results,” Folder 1, Box 3, JYM, Part I.

⁵² “Build a Memorial With Your Votes,” Folder 130, Box 9, MFC, microfilm reel 5; “Men of Texas,” Folder 130, Box 9, MFC, microfilm reel 5.

back to political and industrial slavery.”⁵³ Avant rejoiced in the wake of the 1918 primary over the lack of Mexican participation: “We stood for a white man’s election and that is the kind we had.”⁵⁴ Despite these obvious ethnic slurs, no evidence suggests that Presidio County suffragists appealed to race or nativism during their work. Likewise in Cameron County, with the dramatic demographic shifts it experienced between 1904 and 1920, nativism seems a likely ploy for local suffragists, but no evidence exists that it was used. With the resentment of the growing Anglo population in Cameron County, however, the 1919 suffrage referendum vote as an Anglo expression of political hostility to Jim Wells, and of racial hostility to the Hispanic bloc that buoyed him, seems entirely probable.

Suffrage opponents faced a far easier task than suffrage advocates; to prevail, they had only to argue for the preservation of the status quo and appeal to the conservative inclinations of rural voters. Kraditor explains that, while antisuffrage propaganda and activism was only sporadic, and coincided with the ebb and flow of the suffrage campaign, the “antis” nevertheless “defined the context within which suffragist ideas developed, posed the problems the suffragists had to solve, and asked the questions they had to answer.”⁵⁵ Contrasting the parameters of southern antisuffrage ideology to its counterpart in the northeastern United States, Elna Green identifies the primacy of

⁵³ “The S.O.S. Call to the Women of the State of Texas,” *Marfa (Tex.) New Era*, Jul. 20, 1918.

⁵⁴ “Election Returns Give Surprises,” *Marfa (Tex.) New Era*, Aug. 3, 1918.

⁵⁵ Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement*, 14.

race and gender issues in the South over nativist fears and concerns about radicalism that defined the antisuffrage campaign in the heterogeneous cities in the North. The arguments employed by southern antisuffragists adhered powerfully to the nineteenth-century view of womanhood crafted in the antebellum era, and “rested solidly on a combination of theological, biological, sociological, racial, and states’ rights principles”⁵⁶

In a recent Master’s thesis on the antisuffrage campaign in Texas, Ashley Laumen takes up Green’s interpretation to identify rhetorical strategies specifically employed in the state. Advanced by the Texas Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage (TAOWS)—led by Pauline K. Wells, a Brownsville resident and wife to South Texas Democratic party boss James B. Wells—the most widely circulated arguments against equal suffrage related to the defense of the home and the perpetuation of the cult of true womanhood. As in the rest of the South, antisuffragists employed arguments based in theology, biology, sociology, race, and localism. Laumen identifies another dimension, however, distinct to the antisuffrage rhetoric of Texas: the linkage of equal suffrage to socialism. Antisuffragists used these arguments individually and in combination to portray equal suffrage as nothing less than an apocalyptic threat to the home, southern culture, and western civilization.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Elna C. Green, *Southern Strategies: Southern Women and the Woman Suffrage Question* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 79-100.

⁵⁷ Lauren A. Laumen, “‘Womanly Women:’ The Antisuffrage Movement in Texas, 1915-1919” (M. A. Thesis, Texas Christian University, 2005), 20-23, 41-42.

These arguments appeared in public discourse in rural Texas. However, groups like TAOWS and their often clandestine allies among the corporate and brewing interests of the state logically chose to direct their propaganda campaign at urban population centers; with the exception of the Wells' home county of Cameron, neither organized antisuffragism nor official TAOWS literature regularly appeared in the counties in this study. The ideas of the state and regional antisuffrage movement, however, quickly crystallized into a standard catechism featured prominently in the columns of rural newspapers hostile to equal suffrage, and in some communities sporadic antisuffrage activism appeared in substantial enough form to elicit a response from local suffragists.

No antisuffrage premise appeared as frequently in rural Texas as the claim that the majority of Texas women did not want to vote. The TAOWS used this argument to turn on its head the suffragists' assertion that equal suffrage meant the full expression of American democratic principles. Instead, antisuffragists, claimed, a small but vocal minority purported to decide for all women whether or not they should be entitled to vote—an inherently undemocratic perspective. Sam Braswell, owner and editor of the *Clarendon News* after 1915, was, of the nine counties in this study, easily the most vocally hostile to the idea of equal suffrage in both his selection of news columns and in his editorials. After the passage of the primary bill, Braswell claimed that “women in the mass cares very little about voting,” but, once the prominent women of the Pathfinder Club in Clarendon established their Hobby School, he took care not to attack them directly with his antisuffrage diatribes. He finally conceded in July 1918 that women did in fact have the primary vote, and “those who believe in it ought to take advantage of the

privilege,” but remained convinced that a “majority of the best women” did not want suffrage.⁵⁸ With the defeat of the suffrage referendum in 1919, Braswell gloated, “The women of Texas do not want suffrage, in spite of what the society ‘sisterin’ say.”⁵⁹

Another antisuffrage argument often employed in rural Texas was the threat suffrage allegedly posed to the integrity of Southern marriage through the “de-sexing” of women and the doctrine of “free love.” Informing this view was the far more militant suffragette movement in England, where Catherine Gasquoine Hartley declared, “The free power of selection in love! Yes! That is the true Female Franchise. It must be regained by woman. Existing Marriage is a pernicious survival of the patriarchal age.” Braswell seized this as the “true purpose of the [suffrage] movement,” which was “free love...the growth of divorces and...the day when marriage shall be no more.”⁶⁰ In Anderson County, Mrs. Ned Morris identified a woman quietly circulating a report that TESA’s platform included a plank endorsing “free love,” and requested official literature with which to respond.⁶¹ In Wharton, the *Spectator* ran a column in 1915 from Farmers’ Union President W. D. Lewis declaring his opposition to “unsexing humanity” and that

⁵⁸ Editorial, *Clarendon (Tex.) News*, May 2, 1918; Editorial, *Clarendon (Tex.) News*, Jul. 4, 1918.

⁵⁹ Editorial, *Clarendon (Tex.) News*, May 29, 1919.

⁶⁰ Editorial, *Clarendon (Tex.) News*, Apr. 11, 1918.

⁶¹ Mrs. N. B. Morris to Annette Finnigan, Feb. 17, 1915, Folder 1, Box 10a, JYM, Part II.

the Union viewed “woman’s desire to seek man’s level the yellow peril of Twentieth Century civilization.”⁶²

The apocalyptic threat posed by suffrage to the Southern home, for most the bedrock of Southern civilization, was easily the most compelling argument against suffrage, and became a common refrain for its opponents throughout the state. In Sam Braswell’s view, God had “planted women in the home,” and gave her tasks to occupy her time. To violate that “divine order” threatened “ruin and chaos.”⁶³ Evidently a favorite, the suffrage-as-Armageddon argument became one of Braswell’s most frequently recycled criticisms. The influence of women was “more powerful in the home than it could every be at the polls,” and to allow women to vote was “out of harmony with the laws of God and points to a world disaster in which the foundations of society and the home shall disappear in a maelstrom of woe.”⁶⁴

The menace of suffrage to the southern home is perhaps best illustrated by a 1915 column printed in the Bryan *Daily Eagle* by editor Albert J. Buchanan. A passionate opponent of woman suffrage, Buchanan borrowed a *Collier’s* piece entitled “The Business of Being a Wife,” in which a bankrupt and suicidal young man finds hope and renewal in a warm meal, a well-appointed home, and a comely bride. Buchanan appended his own coda to claim that had the man’s wife “been off at the election helping

⁶² “Why Should Women Vote?” *Wharton (Tex.) Spectator*, Jun. 11, 1915.

⁶³ Editorial, *Clarendon (Tex.) News*, Nov. 8, 1917.

⁶⁴ Editorial, *Clarendon (Tex.) News*, Oct. 5, 1917; Editorial, *Clarendon (Tex.) News*, Oct. 26, 1917.

to save the country when her dispirited husband reached home another tragedy would have been recorded and the history of the family would have been changed.” Suffrage was not only a question of life and death, but “more serious than the European war, and in our opinion, the most serious [matter] the world has ever confronted.”⁶⁵

Suffrage opponents also regularly invoked gendered attacks on the femininity of suffragists, locating them outside the realm of true womanhood. Kraditor cites the antisuffragist claim that the small minority of suffragists would use the vote to make all women “large-handed, big-footed, flat-chested, and thin-lipped.”⁶⁶ Wharton County attorney Ruth Brazzill attested in a *Houston Chronicle* column that “the majority of suffragists are women who come from unhappy homes, or who are themselves discontented or disappointed with life and its opportunities.”⁶⁷ A similar critique appeared in the *Wharton Spectator*, in which Brazzill identified the suffragist not as an “exceptional woman,” but as an “average woman who has created the present conditions out of which has arisen the feminist movement.”⁶⁸ Sam Braswell railed that only “less womanly women” sought the ballot, painting National Woman’s Party members picketing the White House in 1917 as “suffrage-locoed, female tomboys” and traitors.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ “The Business of Being a Wife,” *Bryan (Tex.) Daily Eagle*, Mar. 8, 1915.

⁶⁶ Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement*, 36.

⁶⁷ “Equal Suffrage and the Home: An Argument Against Placing the Ballot in Women’s Hands,” *Houston Chronicle*, Feb. 21, 1915.

⁶⁸ “Woman Suffrage and the Home,” *Wharton (Tex.) Spectator*, Feb. 19, 1915.

⁶⁹ Editorial, *Clarendon (Tex.) News*, Nov. 15, 1917; Editorial, *Clarendon (Tex.) News*, Sep. 13, 1917; Editorial, *Clarendon (Tex.) News*, Sep. 6, 1917.

Gender even became a means by which to assail male suffrage advocates; Houston Representative and antisuffragist Stanley Beard ridiculed male suffragists on the House floor as “sissies” and “willy-boys.”⁷⁰

Both sides of the suffrage debate laid claims to patriotism. Antisuffragists identified themselves as conservative women united to “fight...for freedom—freedom for the great mass of women from hampering political entanglements, that they may attain their greatest development in natural and unselfish service for humanity.”⁷¹ The militance of the National Woman’s Party in Washington, D. C. in 1917 created local publicity problems for rural women marketing suffrage as a just reward for their patriotic service in wartime. In Bryan, Buchanan advocated their immediate arrest, deriding the picketers for “displaying about the largest bunch of idiocy seen in this country in a long time.”⁷² In Clarendon, Braswell thanked the picketers for causing “more injury than everything else that ever happened in this country.” He then called for more of them, “for that cause doesn’t need to prosper. America needs her women in the home, more especially in war times.”⁷³

Texas antisuffragists also linked woman suffrage to socialism, framing it as an ideological threat to Americans. In Anderson County, this argument may have proven

⁷⁰ Laumen, “Womanly Women,” 31.

⁷¹ Laumen, “Womanly Women,” 24.

⁷² Editorial, *Bryan (Tex.) Daily Eagle*, Jan. 13, 1917.

⁷³ Editorial, *Clarendon (Tex.) News*, Jul. 19, 1917.

particularly useful, as the local socialist organization endorsed the Palestine ESA in 1915.⁷⁴ In Clarendon, Sam Braswell discovered news that Dr. A. B. Wolfe, an economics and sociology professor at the University of Texas, had been accused of teaching socialism in his classroom. The professor's wife, moreover, had recently traveled to Dallas with "tomboy suffrage speaker" Maud Younger. Braswell was relieved that Texas thus far remained immune to "such social rottenness," and derided the professor for his "hellish distortions of citizenship. Away with rank socialism and its little sister, womans [*sic*] suffrage."⁷⁵ Braswell took up the theme again shortly before the 1919 election, raving that the suffrage "menace" was "not of the South, it is strictly cosmopolitan, like Socialism and bolshevism... The News man knows that...few Texas women believe the rot that northern feminists believe and we know no Clarendon women believe it."⁷⁶

Race was a more useful issue for the antis than it was for the suffragists. Frightening voters with the claim that enfranchising white women would also enfranchise black women was a simple task in Jim Crow Texas. Publicity from TAOWS and the likes of Joseph Weldon Bailey frequently exploited racial scare tactics, resurrecting reliable bogeymen like miscegenation and "Negro domination" as

⁷⁴ Kate Hunter to Annette Finnigan, Feb. 4, 1915, Folder 1, Box 10a, JYM, Part II.

⁷⁵ Editorial, *Clarendon (Tex.) News*, Dec. 13, 1917. On the investigation of Wolfe, which was part of a larger legislative inquiry into the university's machinery, see "Socialism Explained by Not Championed at the University," *Austin Daily Statesman*, Nov. 22, 1917.

⁷⁶ Editorial, *Clarendon (Tex.) News*, May 15, 1919.

implications of the woman ballot.⁷⁷ Such claims were as illegitimate as they were stale; state laws were already long in place in Texas prohibiting meaningful black participation in state politics. A 1902 constitutional amendment enacting a poll tax penalized impoverished farmers, many of whom were minorities; local initiatives to create white primaries throughout the state marginalized the remainder of the African-American population in the state. By 1906, black Texans had been effectively excluded from the democratic process.⁷⁸ Racial arguments against suffrage rarely appeared in the counties in this study. Only Sam Braswell of Clarendon, in the days before the 1919 referendum, advanced them with a column linking suffrage with black voting.⁷⁹

On occasion, rural suffragists found opportunities to confront the antis directly. In March 1918, Anna Kilpatrick Fain of Livingston spoke for “home-loving women” in Texas on the question of the ballot: “We do not want it. We have not time to digest it, and therefore fear the consequences.” She derided suffragists for their misplaced priorities, claiming, “we had better children a century ago, when mothers talked less and did more.” Kilpatrick sounded a warning to Texas men to “look to well to your defenses. It is not a question of woman’s liberty and rights that is in danger, but the liberty and rights of man.”⁸⁰ Kate Hunter delivered a forceful and very public reply, invoking

⁷⁷ Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry*, 42; Laumen, “Womanly Women,” 37-38.

⁷⁸ Alwyn Barr, *Reconstruction to Reform: Texas Politics, 1876-1906* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 2000), 199-201, 207-208, 248.

⁷⁹ “Suffrage Organization Promises Negro Women Votes—Insult the South, *Clarendon (Tex.) News*, May 15, 1919.

⁸⁰ “Duty and Suffrage,” *Houston Chronicle*, Mar. 7, 1915.

constitutional arguments while hinting at notions of gender equity. “Women are governed by and are subject to the same laws as men,” she explained, “and yet they have no voice in the making of the laws. ...Women are not privileged to express themselves in affairs of government, yet they must live under the conditions that the law imposes.” Women did not, Hunter argued, have to remain complicit in the status quo. “The injustices we tolerate are ours by tradition...there will be a more complete whole when men and women consult together, and from both feminine and masculine view points make the world a better place to live in.”⁸¹

With the epicenter of the state antisuffrage movement in Cameron County, Donna suffragist Ella Pomeroy frequently grappled with Pauline Wells for the hearts and minds of locals. In May 1916 Pomeroy complained to Helen Moore about her lack of progress in the Valley: “It is difficult to connect up with the moving world here; people are poor and indifferent.” She hoped to get started in Brownsville, only to find the effort hobbled by “an Anti that has already been at work and the Catholic element that supports her.”⁸² Through her husband, Pauline Wells commanded a large contingent of Hispanic voters whose obligations to the *patrón* relationship mandated obedience. Pomeroy commented later in May 1916 that “the town is in the hands of politicians who give out jobs on which at least half of the people live...they are afraid to have any ideas. The heat takes the spunk out of the folks, and their poverty and fear do the rest.” Challenging the Wells

⁸¹ “Answering Mrs. Fain on Woman Suffrage,” *Houston Chronicle*, Mar. 14, 1915.

⁸² Ella Pomeroy to Helen Moore, May 10, 1916, Folder 6, Box 59, JYM.

machined invited the possibility of being “knocked on the head,” as an Army officer had evidently recently discovered. The situation made Pomeroy “boil and sputter,” but she was alone in her frustration; “most of the folks” she reported, “men and women, take to cover.”⁸³

Undaunted, Pomeroy continued her organizational efforts in the Valley, and in 1917 managed to crack boss rule. Accompanying Lutie Stearns, Pomeroy campaigned in February in Brownsville, where she and Stearns were besieged by “delighted” men and women who “thanked me personally for breaking in to the Wells’ stronghold.” Pomeroy also encountered a “protégé” of Pauline Wells—recuperating from illness in San Antonio at the time—who was “delighted to have the right replies to that lady’s arguments.” Stearns was equally effusive in her account of the experience, during which she received “the biggest ovation...of any place in the state.” She had “biffed the antis between the eyes, back of the ears, [and] in their solar plexuses” with her address, demonstrating the anti connection to liquor and “how there was no health in them.”⁸⁴

Suffragists in rural Texas proved themselves to be exceptionally skilled with the rhetorical tools given them. Quick to recognize the hostility of the local culture to notions of political and gender equality that gained traction in the northeastern United States, and even to some extent in southern cities, rural Texas suffragists chose instead to define the suffrage movement in the language of the existing cultural patriarchy, thereby facilitating a dialogue that rural Texans could both understand and accept, however

⁸³ Ella Pomeroy to Helen Moore, May 30, 1916, Folder 6, Box 59, JYM.

⁸⁴ Ella Pomeroy to “My dear People,” Feb. 26, 1917, Folder 6, Box 9, JYM; Lutie Stearns to “Dearest Texan,” Mar. 1, 1917, Folder 1, Box 59, JYM.

begrudgingly. As surely as their lives were circumscribed by the expectations of true womanhood, so, too, were the means by which rural women were able to advance the cause of equal suffrage. In the end, of course, the ideas least threatening to a conservative, traditional society proved the most effective, as rural suffragists discovered by combining municipal housekeeping and jingoistic patriotism. These appeals proved equally compelling for rural farm families, to whom town suffragists attempted to reach out. In this combination of missionary tactics and refined message, rural suffragists distinguished themselves from their urban counterparts; as shrewd and competent speakers, organizers, and campaigners, however, they reflected the same political acuity displayed by suffragists throughout the state, the South, and the nation.

CHAPTER IV
THE FERGUSON IMPERIUM:
ANTI-SUFFRAGE INFLUENCES IN RURAL TEXAS

For over a generation, James E. “Farmer Jim” Ferguson shaped political life in Texas.¹ From 1914 to 1918, Ferguson, who served nearly two gubernatorial terms before succumbing to impeachment charges, and his political allies dominated the state government, controlling not only the executive branch, but also the state legislature and the machinery of the Democratic Party of Texas through the state executive committee. With the reins of power in Texas firmly in hand, Ferguson dictated both the fortunes of legislation in the Capitol and the principles of his party. At its peak, his control was unrivaled, and the power supplied by the union of his personality, his oratorical skill, and his political prowess typically shattered any attempts to oppose him. Bound intimately with the political culture of Texas, therefore, Ferguson’s influence was equally bound with the fortunes of woman suffrage in the Lone Star State. A stalwart opponent of equal suffrage, Ferguson would not only menace the prospects of extending the franchise to Texas women, but he would also emerge as the primary nemesis of Minnie Fisher Cunningham and the Texas Equal Suffrage Association.

Yet, to characterize Ferguson merely as suffrage opponent ignores the stimulus public fears of “Fergusonism,” and the corrupt leadership it signified, supplied to the suffrage campaign. Texans went to the polls in the summer of 1918 in unprecedented

¹ Alwyn Barr, *Reconstruction to Reform: Texas Politics, 1876-1906* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 2000), 251.

numbers, driven in part by Texas women exercising their newly granted political power. There they voted for William P. Hobby not only because they supported Hobby and his policies, but also because they sought to stop Ferguson from reclaiming public authority, a possibility created by the threat of a split in the Democratic Party. Women made a strong public case for equal suffrage during the primary, and Hobby's overwhelming success—women supported Hobby by a factor of ten to one—offered for Texans a material example of an argument suffragists had long employed: the woman ballot could cure the state and nation of political corruption. "Fergusonism" thus furnished the woman suffrage movement in Texas its most effective catalyst; in that sense, Ferguson was not only the suffrage movements' greatest nemesis, but also its greatest benefactor.

Ferguson posed a particularly difficult challenge to rural suffragists, who inhabited communities in which both Ferguson's ideas and personality held sway long after he left office in 1917. The romance began in 1914, when Ferguson ran for governor on a platform uniquely styled to speak to the needs of the growing number of tenant farmers in the state. An ardent anti-prohibitionist, Ferguson appealed to the farm vote in traditionally prohibitionist redoubts such as North and West Texas by emphasizing his commitment to solving agricultural problems. Rural Texans responded to these appeals: in 1914, Ferguson won the Democratic gubernatorial primary in 103 of the 196 counties with urban concentrations comprising twenty percent or less of the county population; in the 1916 primary race against C. H. Morris, Ferguson won in 138

of those same counties.² Though driven from office under accusations of financial impropriety and corruption, Ferguson's defiant public image and folksy oratory allowed him to maintain his enchantment of rural voters.

Ferguson and "Fergusonism" threatened the advancement of the rural suffrage movement in several ways. First, the interests that organized in 1914 around Ferguson's candidacy—including major state and national breweries—financed an elaborate propaganda campaign, aimed explicitly at the rural vote, that condemned prohibition and woman suffrage while tacitly endorsing Ferguson. Second, Ferguson remained unalterably opposed to woman suffrage while in office, and his allies within the chambers of the Texas legislature habitually torpedoed bills that offered voting rights to women. Third, Ferguson's control of the Texas Democratic Party ensured that the state platform, despite the incorporation of equal suffrage into the national Democratic platform in 1916, never endorsed woman suffrage, regardless of the number of convention delegates who actually supported it. Finally, Ferguson created and edited after 1917 the tabloid *Ferguson Forum*, a pulpit from which Ferguson and others attacked both his detractors and reforms to which he remained opposed. The weekly enjoyed wide circulation throughout the state, particularly among the rural farm communities upon whose support Ferguson had built his political empire.

Undertaking his first political campaign in 1914, Ferguson entered Texas politics at a particularly delicate time, as the Democratic Party had degenerated into factions

² Primary return data are detailed in "Election Returns from All Counties," *Dallas Morning News*, Aug. 8, 1914; and "Complete Returns by Counties of the July 22 Primary Election as Officially Compiled," *Houston Chronicle*, Aug. 7, 1916.

divided by the liquor question. Eager to enact statewide prohibition, the “dry” faction of the Democratic Party nominated in February 1914 Houston attorney Thomas H. Ball to be the prohibitionist candidate for Governor.³ Ball’s candidacy threatened not only the fortunes of the Texas brewer, but also alienated many leading industrialists content to manage the production and consumption of liquor in Texas through local option laws in place since 1903. The spectre of statutory prohibition in Texas threatened the continued prospects of waging the liquor war on the local level, and the leading “wets” of the state searched for a response to the increasingly organized prohibitionist movement.

Anxious to facilitate Ferguson’s victory over Ball, the brewers of Texas enlisted the assistance of the Texas Business Men’s Association (TBMA), a commercial booster organization created by entrepreneurs in 1906 to oppose the regulatory laws passed by the Thirtieth Legislature and Governor Thomas M. Campbell.⁴ By 1908, however, the organization had been co-opted by the state breweries through Fort Worth grocer Paul Waples, who functioned as a liaison between Texas brewing interests and the TBMA. Managed by the incendiary J. A. Arnold, the TBMA laundered countless thousands of the brewers’ funds and used them—in direct violation of a 1907 law prohibiting the use of corporate money in state politics—to finance boilerplate propaganda attacking reform

³ “Thomas Ball Designated as Pro Candidate for Governor,” *Dallas Morning News*, Feb. 22, 1914.

⁴ On the origins and history of the Texas Business Men’s Association—known until 1913 as the Texas Commercial Secretaries’ Association—see Kevin C. Motl, “Under the Influence: The Texas Business Men’s Association and the Campaign against Reform, 1906-1915,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 109, No. 4 (April 2006): 495-529.

initiatives and their advocates, and distributed free of charge to state newspaper editors, who then used them to fill column space in their weekly and daily papers.

As part of its effort to reach rural Texans with its anti-reform message, the TBMA aligned in late 1912 with the Texas Farmers' Educational and Cooperative Union and its President, Parker County farmer Peter Radford. Radford appeared before the Welfare Commission, a TBMA auxiliary, in San Antonio in June 1912 to submit ideas for marketing cotton in Texas. He presented a plan to secure bank loans on warehoused cotton at six percent, which would encourage farmers to keep surplus cotton off the market and stabilize prices. The commission eagerly endorsed the idea and TBMA President Ben B. Cain pledged his cooperation to Radford. The successful collaboration between Radford and the TBMA convinced the secretaries to inaugurate in October 1912 a "Farm Life Commission" as a liaison between Radford and the Farmers' Union and the TBMA. By 1913, the Farm Life Commission consumed the association's efforts, and Radford evolved from a liaison between businessman and farmer into the public mouthpiece of the entire association, which generally concealed itself and its contributors behind the "Farm Life Commission" name.⁵

⁵ "Endorse Plan to Market Sanely the Cotton Crop," *San Antonio Express*, Jun. 12, 1912; "Banks Ready to Lend at 6," *Houston Chronicle*, Jul. 14, 1912; "Farm Life to Be Studied by Secretaries," *Houston Chronicle*, Oct. 4, 1912; "Cain Again Is President of Secretaries," *Houston Chronicle*, Oct. 5, 1912; "Seeks to Improve Rural Social Life," *Dallas Morning News*, Dec. 15, 1912. On the commission's work, see "Farm Life Commission Meeting," *Dallas Morning News*, Nov. 19, 1912; "Farm Life Commission Meeting," *Dallas Morning News*, Dec. 11, 1912; "Farm Commissioners Plan Broad Work," *Dallas Morning News*, Jan. 12, 1913; "Texas Farm Life Commission Meets," *Dallas Morning News*, Feb. 23, 1913; "Farming Problems are Discussed," *Dallas Morning News*, May 21, 1913; and "Co-operation Theme at Farmers' Meeting," *Dallas Morning News*, Oct. 23, 1913.

By February 1914, J. A. Arnold distributed Radford's writings weekly to eight hundred state newspapers, 650 of which circulated in rural communities, and two hundred dailies and weeklies outside Texas. With the brewers anxious to preserve Radford's nonpartisan public image, they forbade a public endorsement of Ferguson, opting instead for a publicity campaign marginalizing prohibition. In a February 8 commentary, Radford and current Farmers' Union President W. D. Lewis discouraged Texas farmers from participating in "elimination" conventions. They complained instead about the "acute" agricultural problems needing "immediate and intelligent relief...A hundred thousand mothers with suckling babes tugging at their breast forced by poverty to toil in the field is a cry far more distressing to us than the plight of a few drunken bums that voluntarily infest the dives in cities." Radford submitted the Farmers' Union platform for the consideration of "all candidates and [pledged] cooperation to those who [endorsed] its principles."⁶

Through this opaque, labyrinthine structure, the brewers attacked Ball in the regions of the state where his nomination seemed secure—rural Texas. In March, Ferguson entered the race as a "business candidate" promising a "business administration." He drew more attention, however, for his unequivocal stand on prohibition: "I promise, pledge and put the world on notice that if I am elected

⁶ "Fort Worth Man's Writings Published All Over Nation," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Jan. 15, 1914; "Texas Farmers Urged to Avoid Vexing Problems," *San Antonio Express*, Feb. 8, 1914. See also "Pro Conventions Called," *Dallas Morning News*, Feb. 8, 1914. Evidence of brewer control of Radford's public statements is found in Anti-Saloon League (comp.), *The Brewers and Texas Politics*, 2 Vols. (San Antonio: Press Show Printing Co., 1916), I: 110-111.

Governor, and the Legislature puts any liquor legislation up to me, pro or anti, I will strike it where the chicken got the ax.” Ferguson instead embraced the Farmers’ Union platform, and organized his campaign around a promise to prohibit rents above one-third the value of all grain crops and one-fourth of cotton, thereby ending the “curse of farm peasantry” that Radford identified in Texas. Local option had carved prohibitionist strongholds out of rural North and West Texas; the regions were also dominated by the interests of agriculture. Championing tenancy reform offered Ferguson the opportunity to reach a constituency potentially alienated by his stance on prohibition. By committing to the status quo on the liquor question, moreover, Ferguson made a de facto commitment to the interests of state brewers.⁷

As the election approached, the campaign turned vicious. Fergusonites assailed Ball’s credentials as a prohibitionist with the revelation that Ball was a member of a private Houston club where liquor was served. The prohibitionists retaliated with accusations that Ferguson was a mere catspaw for corporate interests and the breweries. The acrimony transcended rhetoric; in early June, one Ball supporter, who had been in Temple collecting affidavits from citizens witness to inflammatory and potentially damaging statements from Ferguson’s earlier speeches, was threatened with physical

⁷ “James E. Ferguson in Race to Finish,” *Dallas Morning News*, Mar. 21, 1914; “Ferguson Fires First Gun in His Campaign,” *Dallas Morning News*, Mar. 22, 1914; “Radford’s Views,” n. d., Folder “Governor’s Race, 1914, Folder 1,” Box 74A, Thomas B. Love Papers (Dallas Historical Society, Dallas, Texas; hereinafter TBL). The Radford pamphlet on the so-called “Farmers’ Platform” has no issue date, but it was written in the style of a newspaper column, with a dateline of “Jan. 1, 1914.” However, the TBMA likely issued this piece around the same time as the other Radford-Lewis pamphlets, which occurred from around mid-May 1914 to the end of June.

violence by local Anheuser-Busch representative C. E. Winn and John W. McLeod, Ferguson's assistant campaign manager.⁸

The TBMA fed the rancor with additional circulars authored by Radford and Lewis. Throughout May and June, rural Texans were bombarded with newspaper columns and literature targeting their political views. In one, Radford and Lewis reminded farmers that their Union "wants no liquor legislation during the next administration and all legislation of whatever character should be subordinated to the needs of the farmers...those who join in this opinion should vote for a candidate...who is a part of the agricultural fiber of state and familiar with the business transactions of the farmer." Circulars released on May 25 and June 1 condemned the "misuse of the ministry" by clergy who took a public stand on prohibition. "When the political machine marks a candidate for slaughter," Radford and Lewis wrote, "it hands the ax to a preacher." They encouraged farmers to "swat the bosses," by voting against "machine-made candidates," who "put misguided preachers to the front to give the machine an appearance of respectability."⁹

⁸ "Gov. Colquitt Speaks at Flatonia and Seguin," *Dallas Morning News*, Jul. 3, 1914; "Ball Makes Denial of Colquitt Charges," *Dallas Morning News*, Jul. 5, 1914; "Candidate J. E. Ferguson's Corporation Connections," *Houston Post*, Jun. 30, 1914; Felix Robertson to Thomas Ball, Apr. 14, 1914, Folder "Governor's Race, 1914-Folder 1," Box 74A, TBL; Granville Sims to Thomas Love, Jun. 4, 1914, Folder "Governor's Race, 1914-Folder 2," Box 74A, TBL; "Brown's Statement in Regard to Temple Affair," n. d., Folder "Governor's Race, 1914-Folder 5," Box 74B, TBL.

⁹ "The Call of the Farm," n. d., Folder "Governor's Race, 1914, Folder 1," Box 74A, TBL; "Down with the Bosses," May 25, 1914, Folder "Governor's Race, 1914, Folder 1," Box 74A, TBL; "Regulating Political Preachers," Jun. 1, 1914, Folder "Governor's Race, 1914, Folder 1," Box 74A, TBL. See also "Back to the Pulpit with the Preacher," *State Topics*, May 30, 1914.

Before long, the Radford/Lewis literature began shaping the political views of rural Texans. Jourdanton attorney R. R. Smith wrote prohibitionist and former Texas House Speaker Thomas B. Love, “The Radford-Lewis propaganda—preachers to their pulpits and the prohibition question to the background—has had its effect, in this county at least.” Houston Ice and Brewing Company President Robert L. Autrey confirmed this in a letter to Philadelphia brewer and United States Brewers’ Association officer John Gardiner. “The work of the Farmers’ Union is proving the effective means in the legislative fight,” Autrey reported. “We have twenty three normally Prohibition districts where the candidates have aligned themselves with the Farmers’ platform, and fourteen other normally Prohibition districts in which some of the candidates, and the ones likely to be elected, have also declared for the Farmer’s Platform.”¹⁰

Some rural editors were not deceived. The McKinney *Examiner* complained about “how many newspapers over the State have published the ‘boiler plate’ stuff sent out by Peter Radford and W. D. Lewis attacking the preachers for taking a hand in helping rid the State of the saloon curse...not 10 per cent of the editors have read the vicious attack made...by these two men... They print it to ‘fill up’ with, because it is free.” “Two-thirds of the country newspaper men of this state,” wrote one informed Walnut Springs resident, “are firmly convinced that the Texas Business Men’s

¹⁰ R. R. Smith to Thomas Love, Jul. 5, 1914, Folder “1914 Funds, A-Z,” Box 62, TBL; United States Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, *Report and Hearings of the Subcommittee on the Judiciary, Brewing and Liquor Interests and German and Bolshevik Propaganda*, 65th Congress, 1st Sess. (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1919), 966-967 (hereinafter *Brewing and Liquor Interests*).

association is using its efforts, through its control of the officials of the Farmers' Union, to defeat Tom Ball for governor." At least one local Farmers' Union—Lamar County—held similar suspicions, as they publicly condemned Radford and Lewis for an "attempt to pervert the union to the interest of a faction."¹¹

Compounding the acrimony was an injunction filed against the TBMA on June 27 by Attorney General Benjamin F. Looney, who accused the organization of violating the 1907 prohibition of corporate money in politics.¹² The news rocked the state, and the suit quickly degenerated into a media circus through which the brewers continued to attack Ball's candidacy with the likes of Hugh Nugent Fitzgerald's sympathetic *Fort Worth Record*.¹³ The scandal divided rural opinion; Farmers' Union locals issued

¹¹ "Texas Politics," *Austin Daily Statesman*, Jun. 17, 1914; "Business Men's Association and Politics," *Waco (Tex.) Morning News*, Jun. 11, 1914; "Lewis and Radford Criticised," *Dallas Morning News*, Apr. 4, 1914. L. B. Russell, editor of the *Comanche Vanguard*, wrote Tom Love, "This plate dope business seems to me to be a serious thing. The insidious method of covertly influencing public sentiment in strictly in line with [President Woodrow] Wilson's recent exposure of high finance authorities in their efforts to get the country aroused over the stringency of the times." See L. B. Russell to Thomas Love, Jun. 26, 1914, Folder "Governor's Race, 1914," Box 61, TBL.

¹² "State Charges Texas Business Men's Association Engages in Illegal Political Activities," *Austin Daily Statesman*, Jun. 28, 1914; "Texas Business Men's Association is Sued by Attorney General," *Houston Chronicle*, Jun. 28, 1914; "Suit to Dissolve Texas Business Men's Ass'n is Filed at Austin," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Jun. 28, 1914; "Looney Brings Suit to Dissolve Business Men's Association," *Dallas Morning News*, Jun. 28, 1914; "Seek to Dissolve the Texas B. M. A.," *Houston Post*, Jun. 28, 1914; "Texas Business Men's Ass'n is Enjoined," *Fort Worth Record*, Jun. 28, 1914.

¹³ The most belligerent defenses of the TBMA appeared in the *Fort Worth* dailies. See "That Restraining Order," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Jun. 29, 1914; "The Unfair Thrust," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Jul. 9, 1914; "Suit Against Secretaries," *Fort Worth Record*, Jul. 1, 1914. Fitzgerald's series of critiques are found in "The Interviewer and the Interviewed," *Fort Worth Record*, Jul. 3, 1914, "Looney Gives His Reasons for Injunction Suit Against the Texas Business Men's Association," *Fort Worth Record*, Jul.

statements condemning Radford and Lewis for selling the organization out, while two members of the TBMA publicly resigned in disgust. The Smithville *Times* assured its readers, “those who know Attorney General Looney best are certain he is only performing his duty without fear or favor, and the suit would have been brought earlier if the evidence had been complete. Mr. Looney never goes off half-cocked. He says he has the evidence to back up his charges. We believe him.” Still others saw political motives. The Sherman *Courier* called Looney a “self-seker [*sic*] in public office” and “officially one of the smallest of all the little officials in this great state.” The Dublin *Progress* painted the suit as a “grandstand play” and an attempt to “manufacture prejudice and political buncombe” for Tom Ball.¹⁴

3, 1914, “Do You Want the Real Facts in Attorney General Looney’s Injunction Suit?” *Fort Worth Record*, Jul. 3, 1914, “No Other Paper in Texas Dares Print This Story,” *Fort Worth Record*, Jul. 14, 1914, “Attorney General Looney, The Record Asks You These Questions: Why Were Not-Contributors to Texas Business Men’s Assn. Sued, and Contributors Not Sued?” *Fort Worth Record*, Jul. 4, 1914, “Texas Industries Are Asked to Plead in Court for Permission Not to Do Something They Are Not Doing,” *Fort Worth Record*, Jul. 7, 1914, “Looney Is Challenged to Make Good His Latest Statements to Record Regarding Injunction Suit,” *Fort Worth Record*, Jul. 14, 1914, “Prediction of the *Fort Worth Record* is Verified by Business Men: Reckless Suing of Texas Enterprises Injures Them Is Statement of Banker of Panhandle,” *Fort Worth Record*, Jul. 5, 1914, “This Enterprise, Sued by the Attorney General, Is Declared To Have Had No Existence,” *Fort Worth Record*, Jul. 9, 1914, “If Suits Are Just, 734 Texas Firms Face Charter Loss,” *Fort Worth Record*, Jul. 12, 1914, and “\$500 Reward,” *Fort Worth Record*, Jul. 12, 1914.

¹⁴ “G. W. Carroll Resigns,” *Houston Chronicle*, Jun. 29, 1914. Reaction of Union locals can be found in “Radford is ‘Called,’” *Houston Chronicle*, Jul. 14, 1914; Editorial, *Houston Chronicle*, Jul. 17, 1914; “Farmers Deplore Situation,” *Houston Chronicle*, Jul. 18, 1914; and Editorial, *Houston Chronicle*, Jul. 3, 1914. See also “Radford and Lewis Did It,” *Bryan (Tex.) Daily Eagle*, Jul. 2, 1914. The *Houston Chronicle* also ran a lengthy diatribe from former Farmers’ Union president D. J. Neill in which he identified Paul Waples and B. B. Paddock as agents of railroad interests. See “D. J. Neill, Expresident of Farmers Union, Tells of Corporate Ferguson Support,”

The leadership of the TBMA quickly circled their wagons. Arnold dismissed the injunction as “just a political law suit.” Ben Cain said, simply, “We are obeying the law and have nothing to fear.” Charter member Buckley B. Paddock called the charges “cowardly,” and Texas Oil Company founder Joseph S. Cullinan volunteered to “go to jail if necessary to indorse the position of the association.” The secretaries categorically denied any wrongdoing and denounced Looney’s allegations. Fort Worth attorney and Fergusonite Will A. Hanger found the suit “ridiculous” and volunteered free legal services in defense of the organization. The businessmen pledged to “dig down in their pockets,” to keep the organization from “retiring under fire” and to sustain it beyond the annual meeting in October. For their part, Radford and Lewis, bound no longer by caution, went straight to the press on the Fourth of July and endorsed Ferguson for governor.¹⁵

Houston Chronicle, Jul. 12, 1914. Favorable newspaper editorials from rural Texas communities can be found reprinted in Editorial, *Houston Chronicle*, Jul. 18, 1914; “Looney After Secretaries,” *Houston Chronicle*, Jul. 6, 1914; Editorial, *Houston Chronicle*, July 24, 1914; Editorial, *Houston Chronicle*, Jul. 13, 1914; and Editorial, *Houston Chronicle*, Jul. 8, 1914. See also “Self Seekers in Public Places,” *Sherman (Tex.) Courier*, Jul. 4, 1914. Quotes from the other editorials are gathered on several sheets, and can be found in Folder 14, Box 47, Joseph Stephen Cullinan Papers (Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library, Houston, Tex.).

¹⁵ “Tex. Business Men’s Ass’n is Enjoined,” *Fort Worth Record*, Jun. 28, 1914; “President Cain Talks,” *Houston Chronicle*, Jun. 28, 1914; “B. B. Cain Issues Call for Meeting,” *Fort Worth Record*, Jun. 29, 1914; “Business Men’s Association Specifically Denies Looney’s Charge of Political Activity,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Jul. 2, 1914. On Hanger’s allegiances, see “Hanger Declares Ball Received Profit From Sale of Malt Liquor,” *Fort Worth Record*, Jul. 12, 1914. Additional accounts of the July 2 meeting are available in “Texas Business Men Confer over That Suit,” *Houston Chronicle*, Jul. 2, 1914; “Texas Business men Rally to Aid of Association Attacked by Official,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Jul. 3, 1914; “Denounced Suit Against T. B. M. A.,” *Houston Post*, Jul. 3, 1914; and “Suit is Protested by Business Men,” *Galveston Daily News*, Jul.

The scandal did little to promote Ball, whose lethargic campaign suffered from overconfidence from the beginning. Businessmen accused Ball of conspiring with the Attorney General to advance his own candidacy—a development the brewers found both satisfying and useful. Despite an eleventh-hour personal endorsement of Ball from President Woodrow Wilson, Ferguson prevailed by a margin of over forty-five thousand votes. Ferguson carried both the urban vote and counties with significant ethnic German and Mexican enclaves. This was expected; Ferguson’s strength in West and North Texas was not expected, and secured his victory. Of the ninety-one North and West Texas counties that voted for submission in 1911, thirty-one voted for Ferguson in the 1914 primary. Given the TBMA’s ubiquitous propaganda efforts to submerge the liquor issue, and Radford’s emphatic demand for changes in tenancy law, some of that electoral support can likely be attributed to their influence.¹⁶

The significance of the Texas Business Men’s Association, however, extends beyond its influence in shepherding rural voters to Ferguson’s candidacy, for not only did the plate matter distributed by the organization include commentaries condemning woman suffrage, but Radford and Lewis, acting as representatives of the Texas Farmer’s Union, would continue after the TBMA dissolved in early 1915 to publicly oppose equal

3, 1914. On the Radford/Lewis statement, see “Farmers’ Officials Ask for Support for Their Platform,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Jul. 5, 1914.

¹⁶ See *Brewing and Liquor Interests*, 988. On the shortcomings of Ball’s campaign and an explanation for Ferguson’s victory, see Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists*, 124-144. Primary returns are available in “Election Returns from All Counties,” *Dallas Morning News*, Aug. 8, 1914. The 1911 submission vote is available in “Official Returns on ‘Pro’ Election,” *Dallas Morning News*, Sep. 21, 1911.

suffrage in the rural newspapers of the state.¹⁷ Both contemporaries and historians of the state and national suffrage movement specifically identify the TBMA as a threat to the success of the suffrage campaign. Citing an April 1915 *New Republic* exposé on the association, Carrie Chapman Catt dubbed the interests behind it “the invisible enemy” and linked the TBMA to a “line of antisuffrage activity that developed in 1915 and was especially directed to the four eastern States . . . where suffrage campaigns were in progress.”¹⁸ Marjorie Spruill Wheeler cites the TBMA’s influence as an anti-suffrage propaganda bureau, as does Eleanor Flexner, who described the association as “one of the most intriguing combinations [of concealed business interests working against reform] to come to light.”¹⁹ Elna C. Green discusses the antisuffrage activism of TBMA secretary Ida M. Darden, who Lamar County Methodist minister and progressive

¹⁷ “Farmer’s Union Leader Knocks Woman’s Suffrage,” n. d., Folder “Newspaper Clippings, 1897-1921,” Box 2F184, Buckley Burton Paddock Papers (Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin); “Farmers Union on Woman Suffrage,” *Bryan (Tex.) Daily Eagle*, Feb. 17, 1915; “Farmer Radford on Woman Suffrage,” *Wharton (Tex.) Spectator*, Apr. 2, 1915; “Why Should Women Vote?” *Wharton (Tex.) Spectator*, Jun. 11, 1915. As late as July 1915, J. A. Arnold distributed plates with anti-suffrage propaganda to the state and national press. One such plate contained anti-suffrage columns entitled “On Woman’s Sphere,” and “Grasping at the Shadow.” A copy of this plate can be found in Folder “Texas Business Men’s Association,” Box 2J377, William Clifford Hogg Papers (Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin).

¹⁸ Carrie Chapman Catt and Nettie Rogers Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics: The Inner Story of the Suffrage Movement* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1923), 157.

¹⁹ Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, *New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Suffrage Movement in the Southern States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 11; Eleanor Flexner, *A Century of Struggle: The Woman’s Rights Movement in the United States*, Revised Edition (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1975), 310-311.

firebrand Robert P. Shuler denounced as the “trusted confederate of J. A. Arnold, when the brewers were prostituting this state through the so-called Texas Business Men’s League, of which Arnold was head.”²⁰

Shortly after Ferguson’s nomination in 1914, his allies seized control of the Democratic Party machinery in Texas, and with it the platform and representation on the national party committee. For four years this would persist, as former TBMA henchman Paul Waples sat as Chairman of the Democratic Party in Texas from 1914 until his accidental death in November 1916. In January 1917 the state executive committee unanimously selected Hillsboro Fergusonite V. L. Shurtleff to succeed Waples, ensuring a Ferguson-friendly party organization until the 1918 convention.²¹

By 1916, the prospects of securing a plank in the national Democratic platform endorsing equal suffrage by federal amendment had grown substantially; twelve mostly western states had already given women the vote, vigorous campaigns were ongoing in others, and public sentiment appeared to be shifting in the suffragists’ favor. NAWSA,

²⁰ Elna C. Green, *Southern Strategies: Southern Women and the Woman Suffrage Question* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 83, 117, 119; *Bob Shuler’s Free Lance* 3 (April 1920): 13. There were also strong linkages between members of the TBMA and the Texas Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, which organized in February 1916. See Lauren A. Laumen, “‘Womanly Women:’ The Antisuffrage Movement in Texas, 1915-1919” (M. A. Thesis, Texas Christian University, 2005).

²¹ Waples died when a train car on the Dallas-Fort Worth interurban line struck his automobile. See “Col. Paul Waples is Killed in Collision,” *Dallas Morning News*, Nov. 17, 1916. V. L. Shurtleff was a Ferguson supporter from the opening of Ferguson’s 1914 campaign. See “Ferguson Fires First Gun in His Campaign,” *Dallas Morning News*, Mar. 22, 1914. On Shurtleff’s selection, see “Shurtleff Chosen State Chairman,” *Dallas Morning News*, Jan. 17, 1917.

eager to exploit the forthcoming presidential campaign, prepared a resolution for the platform of both the Republican and Democratic Parties, and secured the approval of Congressmen expected to lead their respective conventions. Suffragists flooded Chicago in June for the Republican National Convention, where party leaders managed only a tepid resolution endorsing the idea of equal suffrage, but deferring to the authority of the states with regard to enacting it. Although a similar effort produced a more aggressive resolution in the platform of the Progressive Party, suffragists throughout the country looked to the Democrats. Lobbying Democrats for equal suffrage had become increasingly difficult, complicated by both the militant Congressional Union's campaign against the party and the more formidable task of breaking the anti-suffrage Southern bloc. With the Republican retreat from a bold pro-suffrage position, however, few options remained; the suffragists all turned their attentions to the imminent Democratic National Convention in St. Louis.²²

In Texas, the unrelenting grasp in which Jim Ferguson held the reins of political power made the prospects of electing a pro-suffrage Texas delegation all the more daunting. The rebounding fortunes of the prohibitionist faction of the Democratic Party in Texas, measured in part by the resurgent strength of the Anti-Saloon League in the state, sustained the political fratricide that marked the 1914 gubernatorial campaign. Led by the newly appointed Reverend Arthur James Barton, the League had since 1914 increased the readership of its newspaper, *Home and State*, along with both its

²² Catt and Shuler, *Woman Suffrage and Politics*, 250-254. See also "Woman Suffragists Pour into St. Louis," *Dallas Morning News*, Jun. 12, 1916.

membership and financial receipts. In 1915, the League's influence in local option campaigns produced an additional seven dry counties in Texas. With confidence high, prohibitionists eagerly awaited the state Democratic convention, scheduled for May 1916 in San Antonio. A mid-March convention of the League yielded plans not only to launch another campaign for statewide prohibition, but also to subvert wet control of the state party and send a dry delegation to St. Louis.²³

Led by former state House Speaker Thomas B. Love, the "pros" hoped to control the convention, dictate the terms of the platform taken to St. Louis, and elect Love to the national Democratic committee, from which he could integrate federal statutory prohibition into the national platform. Ferguson, leading the anti-prohibitionist faction, anticipated this move, and applied pressure to Love in normally sympathetic precincts during the county conventions in March. Working in conjunction, if not in cooperation, with Ferguson was former Senator Joseph Weldon Bailey, who operated behind the scenes to ensure that anti-prohibitionists and conservatives were elected as precinct delegates to the state convention. Though prohibitionists boasted a majority of the delegates at San Antonio, it was neither a unified nor a numerically insurmountable one. Many prohibitionist Democrats chafed at the influence of the Ohio-based Anti-Saloon League, and resented the interference of "outsiders" in state affairs; Love and Barton publicly united in pursuit of the League's goals in San Antonio, causing states' rights advocates to view Love's campaign with uncertainty. These submerged but nonetheless

²³ Lewis Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists: Texas Democrats in the Wilson Era* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973), 166-168.

potent tensions offered a shrewd manipulator like Ferguson an opportunity to fragment the dry majority and impose his own designs on the convention.²⁴

Complicating Ferguson's plans, however, was Bailey, with whom he had a stormy relationship dating to the 1914 convention in El Paso. There, Ferguson, eager to curry favor with the Woodrow Wilson administration, steamrolled Bailey's efforts to introduce resolutions opposing national prohibition and woman suffrage, both of which were crushed on the convention floor by a factor of six to one.²⁵ Though the ill will had persisted, Love's confident candidacy for national committeeman, and its implications both for national prohibition and Ferguson's prospects as a delegate to St. Louis, united the two adversaries in common cause. Love elicited passion from both sides; Ferguson beefed that he would "stay at home a hundred years before I would ever consent to Tom Love to have any place or recognition at the hands of the Democratic party in Texas." Love himself declared that "my election...is absolutely assured and no amount of frenzy on the part of the opposition can change the result." The controversy even caused a fistfight on the opening morning of the convention between two of Love's handlers and Dallas Mayor Henry D. Lindsley.²⁶ Eager to find any substitute, Ferguson and Bailey embraced Judge William Poindexter—a one-time prohibitionist gubernatorial candidate, an enemy of the Anti-Saloon League, and a Bailey supporter—as a "compromise"

²⁴ Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists*, 168-169.

²⁵ Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists*, 146-147.

²⁶ "Puts Love Issue Up to Wilson," *San Antonio Express*, May 22, 1916; Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists*, 169. The fight is discussed in "Battle Royal is Promised Today," *San Antonio Express*, May 23, 1916.

candidate that would not only appeal to wet Democrats, but also reach out to moderate drys unhappy with Love's intimacy with Barton and the Anti-Saloon League.²⁷

Caught amid this tug-of-war was the prospect of a pro-suffrage delegation to the national Democratic convention. By 1916, Texas suffragists had no greater allies than Texas prohibitionists, who saw the woman vote as a potentially decisive blow to the liquor forces in the state and nation. Love was an advocate of equal suffrage, but his polarizing candidacy threatened the suffragists' agenda for St. Louis. Bailey arrived in San Antonio brandishing the news that he intended to resubmit his resolutions declaring against national prohibition and woman suffrage, and a defeat for Love would all but ensure that the combined forces of Ferguson and Bailey would preside over both the construction of the convention's platform report and the composition of the St. Louis delegation. Unable to influence events on the convention floor, Texas suffragists could only watch and wait.

Convention participants and observers were guaranteed a show from the opening gavel. The *San Antonio Express* defined the four issues of the convention in four words: "Love, Ferguson, Prohibition and Suffrage." The convention began peacefully enough; both sides bypassed some initial disagreement with the mutual acceptance of Hillsboro Judge W. C. Wear, ostensibly a prohibitionist and Wilson supporter, as temporary chairman of the convention. Unbeknownst to the dry Democrats, however, Ferguson secured Wear's allegiance before the convention began—a duplicity revealed when

²⁷ "Bailey and Ferguson Working Together to Defeat Tom Love," *San Antonio Express*, May 23, 1916.

Wear shocked the convention by denouncing national prohibition and woman suffrage, and naming Ferguson, Bailey, Cameron County political boss James B. Wells, and other Ferguson allies to the Platform and Resolutions Committees. Ferguson and Bailey then sat “at a little table, each with his coat off,” and together crafted the Platform Committee’s report, which included statements of “unalterable opposition” to federal amendments enacting prohibition and woman suffrage.²⁸ Meanwhile, the wet-dominated Resolutions Committee secured the adoption of a new technique for selection of national delegates: instead of at-large selections from the entire state convention, the sixteen federal congressional districts of Texas would each select its own at-large delegate. This calculated maneuver guaranteed Ferguson’s presence in St. Louis, as he would undoubtedly be chosen in his own district.²⁹

Thus began yet another Ferguson “steam roller,” as the wet forces delivered rapid blows to the dismantled and reeling prohibitionists. Ferguson and Bailey artfully framed the majority platform report as a proclamation of states’ rights rather than as explicit rejections of the ideas of equal suffrage and prohibition. Bailey eloquently carped about federal encroachment on local autonomy, asking, “Do any of you believe the Federal Government has a right to say who can vote in Texas? . . . Let us never surrender our claim to call ourselves the champions of State rights!” This evidently seduced many delegates, who adopted the report by a vote of 425 to 378, into believing mistakenly that

²⁸ “Governor, Bailey Work Side by Side,” *San Antonio Express*, May 24, 1916.

²⁹ “Chairmanship to Develop Issue in Morning’s Fight,” *San Antonio Express*, May 24, 1916; Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists*, 171.

the platform intentionally left room for eventual state action on suffrage and prohibition. So, too, was the national delegation a victory for Ferguson, who not only was chosen to lead it, but also represented but one of several anti-prohibitionists dominating the delegation. Finally, the wets managed to push the vote on national committeeman to the end of the convention, whereupon compromise candidate William Poindexter was declared the winner by a contested vote of 419 to 347. When the ensuing pandemonium subsided, Wear, “wearing a serenely satisfied smile,” adjourned the convention, and Ferguson triumphantly proclaimed, “the country is saved; the democracy still lives.”³⁰

In St. Louis, the Texas delegation confronted a national party ready to integrate an equal suffrage plank into its platform. Senator Thomas Walsh of Montana warned that twelve suffrage states, all west of the Mississippi, controlled ninety-one electoral votes. From those states, fifteen Democratic senators had been elected. If the party rejected suffrage, women would vote Republican. With the lukewarm endorsement equal suffrage received from the Republican National Convention, Democrats had an opportunity to take the lead in suffrage reform and secure the woman vote for years to come. The majority report from the Resolutions Committee called for “the extension of the franchise to the women of this country, State by State, on the same terms as to the

³⁰ “Ferguson Heads Delegation to National Convention,” *San Antonio Express*, May 25, 1916; “Use Steam Roller to Expedite Vote for Committeeman,” *San Antonio Express*, May 25, 1916; Bailey’s remarks are from “Antis Play Shrewd Game to Victory,” *San Antonio Express*, May 25, 1916.

men;” NAWSA leaders approved, calling the resolution a “much more favorable declaration than they got from the Republican convention at Chicago.”³¹

Before the floor vote, however, advocates for a minority report rejecting suffrage received thirty minutes to make their case. Signed by Ferguson and delegates from Georgia, Indiana, and New Jersey, the report offered a substitute plank declaring party fealty to the doctrine of states’ rights. Ferguson stood alone before the convention to defend the report, mocking the suffrage plank as an attempt “to secure a little political advantage” through a “fatal surrender of Democratic principles.” Amid hisses and catcalls from suffragists occupying the balcony of the coliseum, Ferguson decried the suffrage agitation growing across the nation “when the women across the country should be performing the functions for which ‘God Almighty intended her.’” He challenged the delegates to not be intimidated and “show yourselves free and brave enough to vote your honest convictions.” Senator Key Pittman of Nevada chided the delegates increasingly cheering Ferguson’s tirade, and Walsh soberly reminded them of the stakes of the suffrage decision for the future of the party. The states’ rights hysteria quickly ebbed, and the convention adopted the majority report by a lopsided vote of 888 to 181. Five members of the Texas delegation voted for the majority report, while the remaining twenty-seven voted for the minority report. Texas suffragists drew great satisfaction

³¹ “Democrats Adjourn National Convention,” *Dallas Morning News*, Jun. 17, 1916.

from the convention's stinging rebuke of Ferguson, dubbed by the president of the Dallas Equal Suffrage Association the "laughing stock of the convention."³²

Despite the inclusion of a suffrage plank in the national platform, the conventions in both St. Louis and San Antonio were unmitigated disasters for Texas suffragists. Ferguson's impassioned attack on equal suffrage in St. Louis humiliated suffrage advocates on a national stage, and a prohibitionist majority at San Antonio clumsily allowed itself to be outmaneuvered by its opponents. The state party convention still beckoned in August, however, and Minnie Fisher Cunningham aimed to shore up the suffragists' position in Houston. Among the delegates that approved the San Antonio platform was Thomas B. Greenwood of Anderson County. Cunningham asked Kate Hunter in July 1916 to remind Greenwood that "Messrs. Bailey and Ferguson led him on [in San Antonio] and used him," having convinced him and others that equal suffrage might be supported at the state level. "That question was injected at San Antonio," Cunningham grouched, "by Mr. Bailey as one would deliberately throw a monkey wrench into the machinery to upset the works." The state party convention was slated for August in Houston, and Cunningham asked Hunter to line Greenwood up for them there, where the suffragists would surely confront again the seemingly impregnable Bailey/Ferguson alliance. The thought gave Cunningham pause:

When I consider what Bailey and Ferguson were able to do to experienced men in San Antonio, and then realize that we have to go up against them,

³² Ibid.; "Women Win Fight for Suffrage Plank," *Dallas Morning News*, Jun. 17, 1916; "Ferguson Loses in Fight on Suffrage," *Dallas Morning News*, Jun. 17, 1916. The derisive quote about Ferguson is in "Governor Ferguson Criticized," *Dallas Morning News*, Jun. 18, 1916.

all inexperienced and not even eloquent, there isn't anything that will stop my knees from shaking, except the story in the Bible of Gideon's band that went out against the hosts and were victorious.³³

The suffragists' efforts went for naught, however, as the Ferguson rout in Houston dwarfed the "steam roller" in San Antonio. With 630 of the 895 convention votes secured by Ferguson before the convention even began, little doubt remained as to the outcome.³⁴ Ferguson showcased his strength early, naming Davis E. Decker temporary chairman with an uncontested vote of 635 to 190. J. F. Wolters drafted the majority report from the platform committee, and Paul Waples was again named chairman of the state executive committee. Ferguson's enfeebled opponents could offer only token resistance and were quickly brushed aside.³⁵ With the handwriting on the wall, Cunningham secured a hearing before the platform committee. Knowing that it had been granted only to amuse the committeemen, and expecting to be "walloped" by Ferguson and Bailey, Cunningham still hoped to find someone to author a minority

³³ Minnie Fisher Cunningham to Kate Hunter, Jul. 7, 1916, Folder 3, Box 47, JYM. Cunningham was so incensed by the outcome of San Antonio and St. Louis that she embarked on a tour of South Texas, a wet redoubt, where she and Lavinia Engle organized towns and blasted Ferguson in speeches. See McArthur and Smith, *Minnie Fisher Cunningham*, 51.

³⁴ "Ferguson Forces to Control Convention," *Dallas Morning News*, Aug. 4, 1916.

³⁵ "Ferguson Men Carry Out Their Program," *Dallas Morning News*, Aug. 10, 1916; "Steam Roller Starts in Early and on First Roll Call Flattens Opposition," *Houston Chronicle*, Aug. 8, 1916; "Ferguson Delegates Given Convention Seats by Subcommittee; Officers Get Gifts," *Houston Chronicle*, Aug. 8, 1916; "Submission Forces Decide to Defy Steam Roller in Making Platform Fight," *Houston Chronicle*, Aug. 8, 1916; "'Gigantic Steal' is What F. F. Hill Calls Contests Decision by the Committee," *Houston Chronicle*, Aug. 9, 1916.

report including equal suffrage. As an insult, the committee had State Senator, ardent anti-prohibitionist, and anti-suffragist Claude B. Hudspeth of El Paso introduce the women, whereupon Cunningham delivered the “*hottest* [emphasis original] and best speech that I have ever made.” The committee listened politely and then submitted the resolution to Wolters, who promptly ignored it. The final platform made no mention of equal suffrage, despite its incorporation into the national party platform only a month before.³⁶ In a year that saw the acknowledgement of equal suffrage by the political leaders of the nation, Ferguson’s iron grasp on Texas continued to deny suffragists the opportunity to advance their cause at home.

Emblematic of Ferguson’s autocratic style was his attempt in 1917 to bring the University of Texas to heel through intimidation, faculty and administrative purges, and ultimately the veto of the university appropriations bill. His assault on the university, however, generated unintended consequences, arraying against him the students of the university, the Ex-Students Association, and a broad majority of Texans who recognized the value of a flagship university to the state and bitterly opposed Ferguson’s efforts to subdue it. Shocking even his staunchest supporters with the appropriations veto in June 1917, Ferguson managed to accomplish what no other force had in Texas: he gave common cause to the disparate reform elements in the state, and unified them as a movement against his leadership. Led by alumnus Will C. Hogg, Ferguson’s opponents scoured his personal and political past to discover financial improprieties egregious

³⁶ McArthur and Smith, *Minnie Fisher Cunningham*, 51-52; “Text of Platform Adopted at Houston,” *Dallas Morning News*, Aug. 10, 1916.

enough to merit impeachment proceedings in the House during a special legislative session in August.³⁷

Cunningham immediately recognized the publicity coup the impeachment affair offered to Texas suffragists, crowing to a fellow TESA officer, “This is the chance of a life time to get rid of Ferguson and break the power of the liquor ring and straighten out some of the awful things that have been going on in our state.” With financial assistance from former university regent George Brackenridge, Cunningham and the TESA leadership hastened to Austin to take the lead in pushing for Ferguson’s removal. They arrived to find the city in flames; they handed over their intelligence on Ferguson to the House impeachment committee, and staged a dramatic dusk-to-dawn street demonstration that included imposing banners declaring “WOMEN OF TEXAS PROTEST.” Joining the WCTU and the Texas Federation of Women’s Clubs, TESA suspended all other work to distribute anti-Ferguson literature and speak against him throughout the state. Cunningham called for relentless pressure upon legislators through letters, telegrams, flyers, and meetings to insure that the proceedings would not deflate from a lack of public interest.³⁸

The pressure tactics worked; the House brought twenty-one articles of impeachment against Ferguson—one of which cited him for contempt for failing to

³⁷ The entire impeachment affair is exhaustively chronicled in Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists*, 185-221.

³⁸ Cunningham’s quote comes from McArthur and Smith, *Minnie Fisher Cunningham*, 53-55. See also Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women’s Campaign Against Lynching*, revised edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 36-37.

disclose the source of a recent \$156,500 loan given him by R. L. Autrey and Otto Wahrmond—and dispatched ten managers to the Senate. Eager to escape the decision of the Senate, Ferguson resigned from office on September 24, 1917. The following day, Ferguson was convicted on ten of the impeachment articles by a vote of twenty-five to three, and forbidden from ever again holding “any office of honor, trust or profit under the State of Texas.”³⁹ Although rural suffragists played no direct role in the impeachment furor, the rhetorical linkage between organized Texas womanhood and good government established by the publicity work of the TESA in Austin and around the state supplied an effective argument by which rural suffragists could persuade neighbors and mobilize peers. Cunningham had little doubt about the influence the affair would have on the future prospects of the suffrage movement: “It has been a full six weeks since I have found any man with the temerity to look us in the eye and say he opposed women’s voting in the face of the outrageous condition that has been proven to prevail in our state government.”⁴⁰

Impeachment did little to deter Ferguson’s political ambition, as he began in November 1917 a “campaign for ‘vindication’” by personally editing and publishing a propaganda instrument, the *Ferguson Forum*, designed to sustain the support of his electoral base. The first issue of the weekly *Forum* appeared on November 8, 1917, and ran almost continuously until 1935. Ferguson’s enemies dubbed it the “Ferguson for Rum,” but it nevertheless gained quick currency among Ferguson’s supporters. A

³⁹ Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists*, 215-218.

⁴⁰ McArthur and Smith, *Minnie Fisher Cunningham*, 55.

subscription advertisement in the *Forum* from February 1918 pronounced that the paper had subscribers in 233 of the 248 counties in the state, and circulated twenty thousand copies each week. Later claims cited readership, not circulation, exceeded sixty and later one hundred thousand.⁴¹

The readership of the *Forum* comprised Ferguson's deeply loyal constituency—tenant farmers, urban labor, and anti-prohibitionists. As late as 1924, Ferguson remained “strong among rural voters, who...never read anything but the *Ferguson Forum*.” This was particularly true for the piney-woods region of East Texas, described by Norman Brown as “a red hot Ferguson bed” of Texans “dyed in the wool on Fergusonism.”⁴² Ferguson's support, however, defied geographical limits; assuming its authenticity, correspondence to the *Forum*'s “Letters From Loyal Texans” (after 1918 entitled “Where the Voters Decide”) column represented the entire state. All, of course, subscribed to Ferguson's provincial conservatism, and all were beguiled by his down-home charisma. One Mount Pleasant admirer perhaps best explained the rural view of “Farmer Jim,” declaring Ferguson “the best friend the farmer ever has had in the governor's office.”⁴³

⁴¹ Norman D. Brown, *Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug: Texas Politics, 1921-1928* (College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 1984), 97. Claims to the escalating circulation of the *Forum* are found in *Ferguson Forum*, Feb. 14, 1918; Editorial, *Ferguson Forum*, Mar. 28, 1918; and Editorial, *Ferguson Forum*, October 24, 1918.

⁴² Brown, *Hood, Bonnet, and Little Brown Jug*, 307-308.

⁴³ “Letters from Loyal Texans,” *Ferguson Forum*, Jan. 3, 1918.

When, in April 1918, Ferguson declared his candidacy for governor against incumbent William Hobby, the *Forum* added a new dimension to its agitprop directed specifically at suffragists and the woman vote in rural Texas. Columnist and supposed “Pine Hollow” schoolteacher Sally Jane Spottswood routinely appealed to Texas women to elect Ferguson as a man who appreciated their needs and virtues. Introduced through a letter to the *Forum* in December 1917, in which she articulated the views of many rural Texans by praising Ferguson as “plain, true, nothing covered up, all to the point,” Spottswood became a regular columnist for the paper two weeks later.⁴⁴ Ferguson initially branded the new primary election rights of women the “final and supreme effort of the machine politicians to defeat the will of the people,” and the *Forum* ran columns attempting to intimidate women with the responsibilities of citizenship and portraying Hobby as the true enemy of equal suffrage. The Ferguson camp quickly recognized, however, that it had been handed a *fait accompli*, and therefore needed to capture the woman vote for itself. Employing class-based appeals to rural voters, the *Forum* urged farmwomen them to avoid the “pink tea” city women, “who would rather nurse a poodle dog than a baby.”⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Spottswood’s initial letter appeared in “Letters from Loyal Texans,” *Ferguson Forum*, Dec. 27, 1917, and her first column was “We Need Hands,” *Ferguson Forum*, Jan. 10, 1918. An anti-suffrage column typical of Spottswood’s work is “Womanhood,—Not Feminism,” *Ferguson Forum*, Mar. 21, 1918. The last quotes are from McArthur and Smith, *Minnie Fisher Cunningham*, 66.

⁴⁵ “Women and the Ballot,” *Ferguson Forum*, Mar. 28, 1918; “Women of Texas and the Ballot,” *Ferguson Forum*, Apr. 11, 1918; “Hobby’s Contempt for Woman Suffrage Bill as Shown By Record Of the Texas Senate,” *Ferguson Forum*, May 23, 1918.

Spottswood began a regular series encouraging Texas women to register; some women did not want the ballot in Texas, but “it is here with us, this great opportunity, and we must meet it, embrace it, and make the very most of it.” Every technicality was clarified in the *Forum*; every ambiguity was addressed. The *Forum* printed news of women organizing across Texas in Ferguson clubs; loyal Texas women wrote the *Forum* to declare their intention to vote for Farmer Jim. By July 1918, the *Ferguson Forum* had become one of the most vocal supporters of woman suffrage in the state. As the primary approached, the *Forum* begged, “Let no woman who wants to vote in the primaries neglect or fail to register.” On the eve of the election, Spottswood praised the “splendid registration of Texas women” as evidence of their desire to vote, and called upon all “mothers of men” to stand for James Ferguson, “a friend to every child in this state.”⁴⁶

The ink had hardly dried on the ballots marking Ferguson’s defeat on July 27, 1918, however, before the *Forum* adjusted its view on suffrage. While Ferguson raged about the hundreds of thousands of “liars” afoot in Texas, a decidedly less genial Sally Jane Spottswood asked in the first post-election edition whether the woman vote was legal: “Now, that the tumult and the shouting are dying, and we can look the situation squarely in the face, and the ‘eloquent women instructors,’ who have been traveling the state for four months, have stopped to get their breath, we would all like to know HOW DID THE WOMEN HAPPEN TO VOTE, ANYWAY [emphasis original]?” She

⁴⁶ “To Every Woman in Texas, Urban and Suburban,” *Ferguson Forum*, Jun. 20, 1918; “To the Women of Texas Who Will Vote in Primary” *Ferguson Forum*, Jun. 27, 1918; Editorial, *Ferguson Forum*, Jul. 11, 1918; “Women of Texas; Vote!” *Ferguson Forum*, Jul. 25, 1918.

declared primary suffrage unconstitutional, and determined that “now...is the best time to stop it all.”⁴⁷ The column was her last word on the subject; with Ferguson’s candidacy buried, and with it the need to court the votes of Texas women, Sally Jane Spottswood mysteriously vanished from the *Forum*. Between mid-August 1918 and the June 1919 ratification of the Susan B. Anthony amendment, her byline never again appeared.

No longer obligated to conceal his true feelings about woman suffrage, Ferguson resumed the bellicose stance that defined his gubernatorial administration. As the 1919 referendum approached, the opposition of the *Forum* grew increasingly shrill, running columns from Ida Darden, erstwhile secretary of the Texas Business Men’s Association and publicity director of the Texas Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage (TAOWS), and messages from Ferguson condemning equal suffrage.⁴⁸ Though despondent in the wake of the May 24, 1919 election, in which voters approved statewide prohibition, the *Forum* rejoiced that the suffrage amendment had gone down to the “cyclone” of the anti-suffrage majority: “The men of Texas gave full recognition to the indisputable fact that ‘THE GREAT MAJORITY OF THE WOMEN OF TEXAS DO NOT WANT TO VOTE.’”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ “Is It Constitutional for Women to Vote?” *Ferguson Forum*, Aug. 1, 1918. Ferguson’s reaction to the primary returns is in “200,000 Liars Running Loose in Texas,” *Ferguson Forum*, Aug. 1, 1918.

⁴⁸ Darden’s involvement in TAOWS is detailed throughout Laumen, “‘Womanly Women.’” See note 20 above.

⁴⁹ “Woman Suffrage,” *Ferguson Forum*, Apr. 10, 1919; “Peril of ‘Equal Rights’ for Women,” *Ferguson Forum*, Apr. 17, 1919; “A Cyclone, a Rag Man, and a Trash Pile,” *Ferguson Forum*, Jun. 5, 1919; “The Result of the Voting,” *Ferguson Forum*, Jun. 5, 1919.

With strong readership throughout rural Texas, the *Ferguson Forum* compelled rural voters to oppose the suffrage referendum on the grounds that it threatened the integrity of the Southern household, and thus the foundation of a vanishing way of life cherished by rural Texans. This was particularly true among his electoral supporters from 1918; of the twenty-three counties Ferguson carried in the primary, nineteen voted against the suffrage referendum, most with strong majorities often exceeding a two-to-one margin.⁵⁰ Evidence of the influence of the *Forum* in the counties of this study comes from Lampasas ESO President Lee Lytton Smith, who notified Cunningham a week before the 1919 referendum election that, in response to her efforts to secure a county chairman, she had heard from one woman in nearby Burnet “who has been an ardent Suffragist, but has been reading the *Ferguson Forum*.” The correspondent not only rejected her entreaty to join the movement, but also advised Smith and her sister suffragists to stay away from Burnet.⁵¹

Ironically, however, Ferguson and the corrupt leadership to which most Texans linked him after 1917 proved decisive in delivering to Texas women very rights he sought to withhold. By 1918, the Democratic Party threatened to fracture from within, as Ferguson’s defiant gubernatorial candidacy and the likelihood of a separate prohibitionist candidate created the possibility that a simple plurality could determine the

⁵⁰ “Complete Election Returns on Constitutional Amendments,” *Dallas Morning News*, Jun. 15, 1919.

⁵¹ Mrs. S. J. Smith to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, May 16, 1919, Folder 4, Box 9, JYM.

Democratic gubernatorial nominee. The situation supplied an opportunity for Cunningham to use public fear of a return to Fergusonism to broker a backroom political bargain in March that would at once secure acting Governor William P. Hobby's re-election and give Texas women the right to vote in primaries—a right which, in the single-party political culture of the state, was tantamount to full enfranchisement.

Hobby's mercurial political fortunes after 1917 all but demanded Cunningham's help. Elected Lieutenant Governor in 1914, Hobby garnered his political support from conservatives tied to the brewing industry. John H. Kirby, R. L. Autrey and other establishment Texans with a lengthy history of service to the commercial and liquor interests of the state—not least of which was the Texas Business Men's Association before its demise in 1915—comprised the wellspring of Hobby's early campaign funds and influence. Hobby remained loyal to the conservative elite while Ferguson's subordinate, but when catapulted to the office of Governor after Ferguson's resignation, Hobby had little choice but to confront shifting political currents he could once easily ignore. Effective executive leadership in Texas meant that Hobby had to contend with the sizeable “dry” contingent of Texans, who viewed him with suspicion. Upon taking office, Hobby immediately received relentless pressure from prohibitionists anxious to secure statewide prohibition, something Hobby was eager to delay until after the 1918 primary.⁵²

Hobby's fumbling attempts to straddle the line between the political capital offered by full prohibitionism and loyalty to his conservative base forced him to

⁵² Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists*, 228-230.

dissemble publicly on the liquor question, exacerbating dry anxieties about his leadership. Pressure from the war raised the political stakes, as prohibitionists also began calling for liquor-free “White Zones” within ten miles of army camps or schools. Pursuant to a November prohibitionist convention in Fort Worth, an investigating committee began peering into the conditions in training camps; the state legislature had also created a special commission in the wake of the Ferguson affair to investigate state agencies and educational institutions. Hobby used the investigations to delay action on the liquor question until after the commission filed its report early in 1918.

Complicating the situation further, the state press broke a story that Hobby had accepted a \$16,000 loan from Autrey, the former president of the now-defunct Houston Ice and Brewing Company. This revelation, coupled with Hobby’s obvious reluctance to call a special legislative session on prohibition, convinced Texas dries that Hobby was not their man; discussions began for a statewide meeting in February 1918 to select a candidate “who will take definite action to immediately close the saloons.”⁵³

With his political future darkening quickly, and with U. S. Secretary of War Newton Baker threatening to move the San Antonio military installation if conditions there did not improve, Hobby had little choice but to call a special session on February 2, 1918 to “submit measures to improve camp surroundings.” After conferring with military leaders in San Antonio and prominent prohibitionists, Hobby introduced a bill “to bar the sale of liquor within ten miles of a base,” thereby rendering Texas effectively dry. Strong prohibitionist majorities commanded both houses, where legislators studied

⁵³ Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists*, 229-231.

the ten-mile zone bill. A letter from General J. W. Ruckman of San Antonio appealing to lawmakers for quick action on the bill shattered any lingering opposition, and the bill passed the state House by a vote of 108 to 10. The Senate passed it nearly unanimously three days later, and the law went into effect in April. More importantly, once the zone bill was completed, the legislature hurriedly ratified the federal prohibition amendment, and passed a statewide prohibition bill late in the session, which Hobby reluctantly signed into law on the grounds that civilians should be subject to the same liquor restrictions applied to soldiers. Texas prohibitionists embraced Hobby, who managed to navigate the turbulent political waters of his turnaround on the liquor question by framing it in patriotic ardor.⁵⁴

Hobby's headaches were hardly over, however, as his reversal created the prospect for an anti-prohibitionist challenger in the upcoming primary. Despite the decision by the state Senate in September 1917 disqualifying him from holding office, Ferguson defiantly declared his candidacy for governor in 1918. For rural Texans in particular, Ferguson remained at the center of political discourse. His November 1917 announcement of his intent to again pursue the governorship gained public momentum when the criminal indictments outstanding against him in Travis County collapsed, and the court dismissed the charges. Ferguson issued his ostensibly populist platform in March and formally opened his campaign in Mount Pleasant on April 6.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists*, 232-234; McArthur and Smith, *Minnie Fisher Cunningham*, 60.

⁵⁵ Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists*, 217-218, 236. Ferguson's original announcement is found in "Announcement," *Ferguson Forum*, Nov. 11, 1917. His

Ferguson's candidacy was no paper tiger; he remained a hypnotic stump speaker, with a fiercely loyal constituency. He also retained lucrative relationships with the brewing interests and industrialists cultivated originally through the Texas Business Men's Association during his first gubernatorial campaign. The Ferguson menace at once realigned and divided the Democratic Party, as prohibitionists and conservative wets fearful of Ferguson as a mouthpiece for the underprivileged swiftly migrated to Hobby. In early May Ferguson submitted his application to the state Democratic executive committee for a place on the July primary ballot. Dominated by Ferguson's political allies, the committee swiftly approved the application by a vote of twenty-six to three. Major metropolitan dailies thereafter abandoned their informal blackout of the Ferguson campaign, allowing Texans to bear witness to the bitterest primary campaign since Ferguson defeated Thomas Ball in 1914.⁵⁶

By March the inexperienced Hobby was besieged on all sides, as prohibitionist true believers had also declared their candidacy in opposition to Hobby, who, "if no longer actually wet, was still damp from his previous affiliation." The adroit Cunningham sensed the disaster that lay ahead: the prohibitionists would divide the primary vote, clearing the way for Ferguson to secure the office through a plurality. The suffragists were presented with an unprecedented opportunity, and on January 28,

platform is outlined in "Platform of J. E. Ferguson for Third Election to the Office of Texas Governor," *Ferguson Forum*, Mar. 25, 1918.

⁵⁶ McArthur, *Creating the New Woman*, 138; "Ferguson on Ballot by Vote of 26 to 3," *Dallas Morning News*, Jun. 11, 1918; Gould, *Progressive and Prohibitionists*, 238-241.

Cunningham made her move. Bypassing Hobby, she approached San Angelo Representative Charles B. Metcalfe, a Hobby supporter and a suffrage ally, and pressed him to influence Hobby to submit a bill granting women the primary ballot. With no time for subtlety, she hinted at Hobby's prospective reward: "a large number of new and grateful voters would be his salvation, I should think!" Intrigued, Metcalfe insisted on and Cunningham supplied a guarantee that the suffragists would indeed vote for Hobby, whereupon Metcalfe told Cunningham to remain in the shadows and let him manage the process. Cunningham supplied a list of friendly, neutral, and antagonistic legislators, and Metcalfe lined up a majority.⁵⁷

Obstinate to the end, Hobby continued to duck the suffrage question, demanding that Cunningham supply a petition with the signatures of majorities in both houses. Cunningham complied, and Metcalfe, along with six co-sponsors, attached the woman suffrage legislation, with a proviso to suspend the poll tax that year for women, as a rider to Hobby's Primary Election bill already on the floor. On March 15, with Cunningham, Hortense Ward, and Helen Moore watching from the House Press Table, the House passed the bill by a vote of eighty-four to thirty-four; the Senate acted five days later, passing the measure by seventeen to four. Hobby, employing the rhetorical justification that the service of Texas women in wartime entitled them to new political rights, signed

⁵⁷ McArthur, *Creating the New Woman*, 138. The quote comes from McArthur and Smith, *Minnie Fisher Cunningham*, 61-62.

the bill into law on March 26. The day after Hobby signed the bill, Kate Hunter sent Cunningham her congratulations from Palestine: “The beginning of the end is here.”⁵⁸

Though Cunningham loathed Ferguson as “the implacable foe of woman Ferguson’s suffrage,” he and the heavy-handed, corrupt style of leadership he came to represent, more than any other factor in Texas political life, advanced the cause of woman suffrage in Texas.⁵⁹ As Governor, Ferguson unquestionably proved an insurmountable obstacle to the fortunes of woman suffrage in Texas. Whether using his peerless oratorical skill to oppose suffrage publicly or leaning on his allies to kill suffrage bills in the legislature, Ferguson’s unyielding control of the Democratic Party in Texas denied Cunningham and TESA even a marginal salient through which to pursue their political goals. As the embodiment of corruption, however, Ferguson and “Fergusonism” dislodged the inertia among lawmakers concerned about the prospects of a third Ferguson gubernatorial term and supplied Texas women with voting rights tantamount to full enfranchisement.

For rural suffragists, Ferguson proved uniquely problematic, as the machinery erected to elect him and then sustain his administration was deliberately designed to pander to and manipulate the views of rural Texans. Beginning with the Texas Business Men’s Association’s use of Farmers’ Union President Peter Radford to put a friendly and

⁵⁸ McArthur and Smith, *Minnie Fisher Cunningham*, 62; Harper, et al., eds., *History of Woman Suffrage*, VI: 637; Kevin C. Motl, “A Model for Rural Activism? The Woman Suffrage Movement in Brazos County, 1915-1920,” *South Texas Studies* 15 (2004): 53; Kate Hunter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Mar. 27, 1918, Folder 50, Box 4, MFC, microfilm reel 2.

⁵⁹ The quote is from Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry*, 36.

trusted face on a covert anti-prohibitionist agenda, Ferguson regularly dipped into the well of his rural support to engage in audacious conduct while governor. Nor did this combination of interests abandon Ferguson after the TBMA dissolved; they continued to supply him with funds and the propaganda instruments necessary to maintain the support of his rural and working-class base, a strategy that produced results with Ferguson's re-election in 1916.

Ferguson's public persona, moreover, appealed to rural Texas voters by personifying tradition and the Jeffersonian image of the yeoman farmer in a time of turbulent economic and social change. That rural Texans reacted strongly to the "Farmer Jim" image is evidenced by the success of the *Forum* not only in terms of subscription rates, but also by the influence Ferguson was able to wield over rural political attitudes even as a disgraced leader. Cumulatively, Ferguson's influence elevated the challenge rural suffragists confronted, for not only did they need to counter the inherently conservative and patriarchal culture of their communities, but they also had to contend with an agent actively opposing and misrepresenting their agenda to their fellow Texans.

CHAPTER V
CHANGING MINDS, CHANGING VOTES:
THE LEGISLATIVE BATTLE FOR EQUAL SUFFRAGE

Convincing their friends and neighbors of the merit of equal suffrage was but one of the tasks confronting rural suffragists. From 1915 to 1919, the primary focus of Texas suffragists' activism was to convince state lawmakers to support equal suffrage legislation, often introduced by a TESA ally in the House or Senate. To do so, suffragists gathered signatures on petitions circulated throughout the community, wrote individual letters to their representatives, and convinced influential local men to do the same. For some, either persuading or replacing state legislators hostile to suffrage presented an equally formidable challenge. For the others, in counties already represented by legislators sympathetic to the cause, the aim was to demonstrate the existence of a pro-suffrage constituency sizeable enough to safeguard an incumbent's re-election.

These efforts, however, rarely had any meaningful effect on either their representatives' views or votes. Lawmakers committed to opposing suffrage—occasionally despite explicit promises to the contrary—did so regardless of the pressure placed upon them by their pro-suffrage constituents. Instead, opposition among state lawmakers to equal suffrage steadily dissipated between 1915 and 1919 in response to three factors: first, the desire to “purify” the Texas vote by disenfranchising resident aliens; second, the conviction that women were entitled to a reward for their patriotic service during the First World War; and finally, the

acknowledgement among Texas politicians of the political capital offered by the woman vote. Less an awakening to the natural right of women to the ballot or to any suggestion of gender equity, support for equal suffrage represented a practical response to the changing political climate of post-1914 Texas. Pragmatism, not persuasion, made the difference.

The first opportunity for Texas legislators to declare their sympathies came in 1915 with the introduction of House Joint Resolution (HJR) 15, cosponsored by McMullen County Representative Frank H. Burmeister.¹ Anticipating the bill, the TESA encouraged local suffragists to pressure their representatives to support it. In Anderson County, the Palestine ESA passed a resolution endorsing the bill, and forwarded it immediately to Representative Hill Walters and State Senator W. J. Townsend, along with letters from individual members soliciting their intentions. Walters quickly responded that he had committed to supporting the Burmeister bill “sometime ago,” and promised to vote for it.² Suffragists in Lampasas arranged for prominent local businessmen to contact their representatives, particularly House member Josh F. A. Tharp, whom Lampasas ESO President Lee Lytton Smith believed opposed equal

¹ The Senate took no action on equal suffrage that session. Suffrage legislation had actually been introduced in the House in 1907 and 1911 by Ninety-Seventh District Representative Jess Baker, but both bills reported unfavorably out of committee, and died almost immediately thereafter.

² “Great Audience Heard Miss Todd,” *Palestine (Tex.) Daily Herald*, Feb. 8, 1915; “Walters Favors Woman’s Suffrage,” *Palestine, (Tex.) Daily Herald*, Feb. 11, 1915.

suffrage.³ In Brazos County, Bryan suffragist Pattie Sims remained leery of “ignorant and pig headed” Representative Charles S. Gainer, though Gainer had pledged personally to Finnigan to support HJR 15.⁴

Despite an overwhelmingly favorable committee report, HJR 15 faced an uphill battle; with each vote, Burmeister asked the House sergeant-at-arms to close and lock the chamber doors in order to prevent hostile lawmakers from denying a quorum. The bill ultimately failed to achieve the two-thirds House majority necessary to amend the state constitution, garnering thirty-two nays against ninety yeas with nineteen members abstaining. Among the counties in this study, lawmakers’ votes yielded mixed results. The bill faced three separate votes, and in each, the representatives for Anderson, Donley, Lampasas, Presidio, and Wilbarger Counties remained steadfast in their support. Two representatives opposed the bill each time—Gainer and L. H. Bates of Cameron County.⁵

³ Mrs. S. J. Smith to Annette Finnigan, Jan. 22, 1915, Folder 6, Box 15b, Jane Yelvington McCallum Papers (Austin History Center, Austin Public Library, Austin, Tex.; hereinafter JYM), Part II.

⁴ Sims also had a low opinion of J. R. Astin, the Senator for Brazos County, describing him to Finnigan as a “hopeless case.” Correspondence containing Sims’ warning about Gainer and Gainer’s promise to Finnigan is found in Pattie Sims to Annette Finnigan, Dec. 12, 1914, Folder 2, Box 10a, JYM, Part II; and Annette Finnigan to Pattie Sims, Jan. 29, 1915, Folder 2, Box 10a, JYM, Part II.

⁵ Texas Legislature, House, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Regular Session of the Thirty-Fourth Legislature, Convened January 12, 1915, and Adjourned March 20, 1915* (Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones, Co., 1915), 616, 845, 1044 (hereinafter *House Journal*).

The defeat of the Burmeister bill in 1915 gave suffragists two years to make changes in their representation in Austin. The problem was particularly acute in Wharton County, where both legislators consistently opposed suffrage at every opportunity. Upon her selection as president of the Wharton Woman Suffrage Association in 1916, Corinne Fullerton wasted no time in attending to local politics, where State Senator and Fergusonite W. L. Hall remained a serious obstruction to reform. Fullerton asked Cunningham in April, “Can we beat W. L. Hall in this district? He is one of the most influential anti’s we have to oppose. He controls Wharton County absolutely.” Cunningham was unequivocal: “No there is no chance to defeat him, he is what is called a ‘Holdover.’” She encouraged Fullerton to exert public pressure on Hall to act on behalf of his constituency, rather than his personal views, when a suffrage bill appeared. “You know he has a perfect right to vote against woman suffrage at the polls,” Cunningham noted, “He has no right to vote against the SUBMISSION of the question to the sovereign people for decision, and that is the way we will have to reach him.”⁶

The District 73 seat in the state House was up for re-election in 1916, and the impassioned Fullerton mounted an aggressive campaign to pressure the prospective candidates. In May 1916, WWSA members wrote candidates T. J. Hardey and A. J. Isaacson to ascertain their suffrage views. The women vowed to “bring all the influence they have to bear” for the pro-suffrage candidate, and planned to coordinate with the El

⁶ Corinne Fullerton to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Apr. 16, 1916, Folder 2, Box 55, JYM; Minnie Fisher Cunningham to Corinne Fullerton, Apr. 20, 1916, Folder 2, Box 55, JYM.

Campo and Jackson County organizations to create an impressive constituency. The Wharton *Spectator* took notice: “Woe to the husband, sweetheart, brother, son, or other male relative should he fail in support of the ladies’ candidate.” Isaacson immediately declared his support for equal suffrage and his willingness to vote for a suffrage amendment.⁷ El Campo suffragist Hettie Hefner supplied intelligence on Hardey in October, informing Helen Moore that the El Campo resident was “as much opposed to suffrage as I am in favor of it.”⁸

The 1917 regular session saw some improvement in the prospects for equal suffrage, as the House Committee on Constitutional Amendments returned a unanimous favorable report on House Joint Resolution 9, sponsored, among others, by Donley County Representative R. L. Templeton. Jess Baker delivered an impassioned speech appealing to lawmakers to “take our women...and lift them to a higher plane, where their intelligence and patriotism may have full play.” His plea fell on deaf ears, as the House rejected engrossment of the amendment by a vote of seventy-six yeas to fifty-six nays, among which were the majority of this study’s legislators. Only three—Templeton, and R. L. McDowra and Marvin P. McCoy of Lamar County—voted for engrossment. T. J. Hardey, the freshman House member from Wharton County, confirmed Hettie Hefner’s

⁷ “Local and Personal,” *Wharton (Tex.) Spectator*, Apr. 28, 1916; “Getting into Politics,” *Wharton (Tex.) Spectator*, May 19, 1916; “In Favor Woman’s Suffrage,” *Wharton (Tex.) Spectator*, May 26, 1916.

⁸ Hettie Hefner to Helen Moore, Oct. 17, 1916, Folder 5, Box 59, JYM.

assessment by opposing engrossment—a stance he would maintain throughout the suffrage campaign.⁹

Among the opposing votes was José T. Canales of Cameron County. In January 1917, Edith Hinkle League suggested to Ella Pomeroy a letter campaign to Canales, who claimed “that he is a Suffragist personally but will have to vote against Submission, as nobody else in his district is a Suffragist.” She encouraged Pomeroy to have Canales “fairly pelted” with letters to demonstrate local support for the bill. Pomeroy replied that she had already begun: “as a rule, only three letters are required to set the imagination of a representative to working and I am tolerably sure of getting three to him!” In the wake of his vote, Canales, an erstwhile beneficiary of the Wells machine eager to broaden his constituency to include the growing Anglo presence in the Valley, felt compelled to account for his actions. “Personally,” Canales explained, “I am in favor of woman suffrage; for in my judgment it is indefensible to deprive women to vote.” Canales boldly declared, “There is no sound argument against woman suffrage; it is against equity, justice and right to deprive them from exercising the ballot.” His district, however, was “so strong against Woman suffrage” that he had to cast an opposing vote. Canales maintained, however, that he would “endeavor to educate my people by preaching the good doctrine of ‘equal rights to all and special privileges to none.’”¹⁰

⁹ Texas Legislature, House, *House Journal*, 35th Leg., Reg. Sess., 435-437. On Hardey, see also Texas Legislature, House, *House Journal*, 36th Leg., 4th Called Sess., 332, 335.

¹⁰ Edith Hinkle League to Ella Pomeroy, Jan. 22, 1917, Folder 2, Box 59, JYM; Edith Hinkle League to Ella Pomeroy, Jan. 23, 1917, Folder 2, Box 59, JYM; Ella Pomeroy to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Jan. 26, 1917, Folder 2, Box 59, JYM.

In the Senate, W. L. Hall of Wharton confirmed Corinne Fullerton's fears, proving an insurmountable obstacle to equal suffrage legislation. O. S. Lattimore of the Thirtieth District sponsored Senate Bill 242, and the bill was assigned to the Committee on Commerce and Manufactures, which Lattimore chaired. Following a favorable report, however, Hall sponsored an effort to send the bill back to committee, but moved to assign it instead to the Committee on Privileges and Elections, on which suffrage opponents held a majority. Presidio County Senator Claude B. Hudspeth, a confirmed anti-suffragist, seconded Hall's motion, which succeeded despite Lattimore's attempt to fight it. The new committee returned an unfavorable report, with Brazos County Senator E. A. Decherd, Jr., submitting a favorable minority report, and over Lattimore's eleventh-hour attempt to resurrect the bill out of order, it died before an engrossment vote.¹¹

Hall proved equally troublesome in the Fourth Called Session of the legislature in 1918, during which Representative Charles B. Metcalfe introduced House Bill 105 enfranchising Texas women for primary elections and nominating conventions. Senator Lattimore had once again introduced his own bill, Senate Bill 53, which received this time a favorable report from the Committee on Privileges and Elections. HB 105

Canales' address is found in Texas Legislature, House, *House Journal*, 35th Leg., Reg. Sess., 436-437. Canales' relationship to the Wells machine and his political appeals to the ethnic blocs in Cameron County are discussed in Evan Anders, *Boss Rule in South Texas: The Progressive Era* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 246-247.

¹¹ Texas Legislature, Senate, *Journal of the Senate, State of Texas, Regular Session of the Thirty-Fifth Legislature, Convened in the City of Austin January 9, 1917 and Adjourned Without Day March 20, 1917* (Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones, Co., 1917), 211, 279, 1339 (hereinafter *Senate Journal*).

replaced SB 53, and Hall, Hudspeth, Archie Parr of Cameron County, and F. M. Gibson of Lamar all voted against passage. J. J. Strickland of Anderson County voted yea, but invalidated it by pairing his vote with an opposing one. The bill nevertheless passed by a vote of seventeen to four.¹²

The House had already acted on HB 105 days before, delivering a unanimously favorable committee report and, with the chamber again sealed, passing the bill to engrossment by a vote of eighty-seven to thirty-one. Of the legislators included in this study, only Anderson County Representative John R. Moore, Lampasas County Representative W. V. Dunnam, and Hardey of Wharton opposed engrossment. Responding directly to the appeals of Cameron County suffragists, José Canales again addressed the chamber, pleased to support the bill “at the request of several hundred citizens of my district.”¹³ Canales preferred a constitutional amendment fully enfranchising women, but “if the women are so anxious to have this right that they would rather have a half measure than a full measure, let them have it.” With language added requiring women to pay poll taxes after 1918, HB 105 passed with a majority of

¹² Texas Legislature, Senate, *Senate Journal*, 35th Leg., 4th Called Sess., 227, 355.

¹³ Canales likely voted based upon numerous petitions sent him by the San Benito Equal Suffrage Association in early March. Frances Heywood reported to Cunningham the organization’s efforts to gather signatures, claiming to have gathered “several hundred names, requesting him to support any measure that may come before the present legislature in behalf of equal suffrage.” See Mrs. Alba Heywood to “Minnie Cunningham Fisher,” Mar. 12, 1918, Folder 49, Box 4, MFC, microfilm reel 2.

fifty votes. Moore, Hardey, and Dunnam again cast the only opposing ballots among the legislators representing the counties in this study.¹⁴

The new power granted to women in Texas appears to have engendered a change in W. L. Hall, who shortly after the special session began marketing himself not only as a Hobby enthusiast, but also a suffrage advocate. In June, the *Spectator* ran a column from Hall declaring that Hobby had “no better friend in the chamber than the Senator from Wharton.” Hall cited Woodrow Wilson’s support for suffrage, and acknowledged that “great changes have come about in all spheres of human activity and human thought in the past few months.” Enough women favored suffrage, Hall decided, that it would “be best to give it to them at as early a date as possible.”¹⁵ Hall’s new look continued in July, when during a “liberally applauded” Wharton speech he claimed that he now “welcomed” suffrage because “women were taking the places of men in so many lines they properly should have a voice in the selection of the officers from constable to president.”¹⁶

The politically savvy Elizabeth Cline didn’t buy it, calling Hall a “rank Ferguson man” and accusing him in a May letter to Cunningham of hidden allegiances to Ferguson and the liquor interest. The Clines were personal friends to Hobby, and as Elizabeth saw “danger ahead” in Hall’s prevarications, she asked for Cunningham’s help

¹⁴ Texas Legislature, House, *House Journal*, 35th Leg., 4th Called Sess., 331-335.

¹⁵ “W. L. Hall Would Succeed Himself,” *Wharton (Tex.) Spectator*, Jun. 28, 1918; Editorial, *Wharton (Tex.) Spectator*, Jun. 28, 1918.

¹⁶ “Senator Hall Spoke Friday,” *Wharton (Tex.) Spectator*, Jul. 19, 1918; “How Stand the Candidates,” *Dallas Morning News*, Jul. 19, 1918.

in forcing Hall to “declare himself.” Cunningham needed to remind local women of “their duties to their homes, state, and educational interests,” and to encourage them to oppose Hall, who was a “sick man,” and “[would not] make much of a fight for the office.” Cline, who was by 1918 fully immersed in the Red Cross as County Chairman, considered herself a “silent worker” who hesitated to “put the Red Cross in politics;” she therefore shrank from leadership. She instead appealed to Cunningham to “call upon the women to help and I KNOW that they will.”¹⁷

When Hall’s columns appeared in the offices of the Galveston ESA, Edith Hinkle League reminded Cline that A. B. Turner of El Campo had entered the primary race against Hall, and it was “the desire of the heart of every true suffragist...to defeat this man W. L. Hall, who fought our cause in every possible manner.” Turner was a “good, clean moral man,” and Wharton women should “root for him.” Cline herself had seen the light. “I have not been an original suffragist,” she confessed, “but now shall and will make the most of the opportunity for the making of good government.” Unmoved by his new image, and sure that “in reality Hall is secretly doing all he can for Ferg–,” she now publicly opposed Hall, and remained confident that a hard fight would win the election for Turner.¹⁸ Cline was partly right: although Hall ultimately won a tight race, Turner defeated Hall in Wharton County by a vote of 1454 to 1012. Hall carried the Wharton

¹⁷ Elizabeth Wooten Cline to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, May 29, 1918, Folder 120, Box 8, Minnie Fisher Cunningham Papers (Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library, Houston, Tex.; hereinafter MFC), microfilm, reel 4.

¹⁸ Edith Hinkle League to Mrs. H. A. Cline, Jun. 29, 1918, Folder 120, Box 8, MFC, microfilm reel 4; Elizabeth Wooten Cline to Edith Hinkle League, Jul. 1918, Folder 120, Box 8, MFC, microfilm reel 4.

precinct, but was drubbed in El Campo by more than a two to one majority; of the sixteen county precincts, Hall carried only five.¹⁹

The dramatic influence Texas women exhibited in the 1918 primary stimulated interest in equal suffrage among parties who now stood to benefit from the woman vote. This interest precipitated in 1919 a crisis for both the state and national suffrage movements, as seemingly well-intentioned suffrage advocates pushed through the state legislature a referendum bill for a constitutional amendment fully enfranchising Texas women. Although Jane McCallum supplied a sanguine explanation for this development, recalling that “lawmakers were so gratified at the part played by the women during the war and the ‘impeachment’ that they were ready and anxious to grant anything wanted of them,” Cunningham identified a more pernicious source: prohibitionists eager to parlay the newfound political clout of Texas women into a constitutional amendment outlawing liquor. “They need us and they know that they would never have gotten this far without us,” Cunningham complained to Carrie Chapman Catt. The constitutionality of the primary suffrage law remained suspect, and “it is nearly giving these men, who didn’t hardly lift a finger to help us get it, nervous prostration that we are not more diligent as to the courts and as to getting full Suffrage.”²⁰

¹⁹ “Election Will Make Very Few Changes,” *Wharton (Tex.) Spectator*, Aug. 2, 1918; “Wharton County Tabulated Returns of Democratic Primary,” *Wharton (Tex.) Spectator*, Aug. 9, 1918.

²⁰ Judith N. McArthur and Harold L. Smith, *Minnie Fisher Cunningham: A Suffragist’s Life in Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 75; Ida Husted Harper, et al., ed., *History of Woman Suffrage*, 6 Vols. (New York: Arno Press, 1969),

Cunningham and her allies had already worked meticulously at the state Democratic convention in September 1918 to derail any prospects for a full suffrage resolution, opting instead to pursue NAWSA's "Winning Plan" and passage of a federal suffrage amendment, which was gaining momentum in Washington. The risk of a state amendment campaign was primarily to the political palatability of a suffrage amendment to legislators on Capitol Hill; all previous attempts at a suffrage referendum in the South had failed miserably, and failure in Texas could jeopardize critical swing votes in Congress. This prospect was not lost on the anti-suffrage forces in the state, which compounded the difficulty of the situation by pushing a May 24 date for the referendum election.²¹

Cunningham was caught fast. NAWSA's master strategy was known only to Catt and her inner circle; explaining it openly to suffragists in Texas would surely deliver NAWSA to its enemies. Moreover, the conflict threatened to create problems within the TESA itself, where Cunningham had already secured a resolution against a state campaign. Yet, how could the suffragists publicly reject an overture for full voting rights and not deliver a mortal blow to their growing support throughout the state among men and women who believed—naively, Cunningham thought—the success of the Hobby campaign indicated strong

VI: 639. On the prohibitionist push for an early state amendment, see Walter L. Buenger, *The Path to a Modern South: Northeast Texas between Reconstruction and the Great Depression* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 180.

²¹ McArthur and Smith, *Minnie Fisher Cunningham*, 75; Harper, et al., ed., *History of Woman Suffrage*, VI: 639.

prospects for approval? Cunningham attempted a delaying tactic, arranging for her allies in each chamber to introduce bills setting the referendum date for the 1920 general election. By then, she hoped, the federal amendment would pass and render the state question moot. Called away to Washington by both commitment to NAWSA and a desperate need for the salary given her as a Congressional Secretary, Cunningham left the Texas campaign in the hands of Jane McCallum and Jessie Ames.²²

Despite their considerable talents, however, McCallum and Ames did not cast the long shadow of Cunningham, whose absence at this critical juncture shook the confidence of Texas suffragists. The damage created by the confusion between state and federal amendments among rural suffragists quickly became evident, as Lee Smith wrote Edith League from Lampasas on January 17, alarmed “to learn thru the press of a division in our State Suffrage [sic] Association. This is the first news that I have had that we did not want the amendment voted on until 1920. We asked for this constitutional amendment at the State Convention and now it is not wanted and none of us have been informed why [emphasis original].” Smith described an unidentified party in Austin who had been urging women to send telegrams of approval for the state referendum to the legislature, but she promised to wait until they had more information from headquarters. League assured Smith that “there has been no break in the Suffrage ranks, although I believe there is a certain element that is attempting just this thing.” She explained that enemies of the TESA had set the May 24 date to ensure that the

²² McArthur and Smith, *Minnie Fisher Cunningham*, 76-78.

imminent Liberty Loan campaign would consume the time, resources, and energy necessary for the cause. She notified Smith of a Senate bill had been reported out of committee designating an election date of August 16; League expected this date to be the one the TESA would support, and asked Smith to wait for additional instructions.²³

In Cameron County, Ella Pomeroy also wanted answers about the sudden shift in objective:

...I am somewhat mystified by the reports in the Chronicle that the State Association is endeavoring to stall State action, and is working for the Federal Amendment only. Any efforts I have made have been in behalf of State action; and I should like to know where I stand before going further. Of course Federal action is all right, also. But appeals for money should make the difference and the destination of funds clear. State action seems to me to be the right thing now; and would stir up Federal action, I am sure. Please explain the situation clearly. A letter should be sent to the Chronicle and to any other papers that have been making [sic] much of 'the split.'

League quickly reassured Pomeroy that "no 'split' of which we are advised" had occurred. There were those, she cautioned, who were "trying to make a break in the 'ranks,' but we have no part in that." Satisfied with this explanation, Pomeroy had "no idea" about the origins of the rumor, "unless it was in the brain of a reporter for the Chronicle who doubtless thought it would reflect glory on Houston if Hortense Ward could pull of state suffrage all by herself."²⁴

Pomeroy's concerns about the direction of the campaign illuminate the crux of the problem for the TESA. For municipal and county level leaders like Lee Smith to need clarification on the state/federal amendment question reflected only the occasional character

²³ Mrs. S. J. Smith to Edith Hinkle League, Jan. 17, 1919, Folder 4, Box 9, JYM; Edith Hinkle League to Mrs. S. J. Smith, Jan. 18, 1919, Folder 4, Box 9, JYM.

²⁴ Ella Pomeroy to Edith Hinkle League, Jan. 19, 1919, Folder 6, Box 9, JYM; Edith Hinkle League to Ella Pomeroy, Jan. 20, 1919, Folder 6, Box 9, JYM; Ella Pomeroy to Edith Hinkle League, Jan. 25, 1919, Folder 6, Box 9, JYM.

of the communication between TESA headquarters and the local suffragists, particularly those removed from urban centers. For a Senatorial District Chairman like Pomeroy, however, who had regular contact with headquarters and was privy to the intricacies of the organization's strategy, such confusion threatened the very integrity of the organization and the movement in Texas. To minimize the damage, McCallum released a statement to the major dailies of the state assuring suffragists and their allies that the TESA remained unified, organized and "merely [awaited] the setting of the date [of the election] before launching an active campaign in every county in the State."²⁵

In Austin, the suffragists' attempts to delay the referendum were overwhelmed, as overconfidence among citizens and legislators alike generated an irrepressible momentum towards an early election date. The collapse of the federal amendment in the U. S. Senate threatened a perfect storm for Texas suffragists, which materialized when Hobby called in a January 16 message to the legislature for a vote on full woman suffrage in 1919. The nativist hysteria touched off by the war and the patriotic rationale created by women's participation in support work informed the rhetorical justification for the suffrage amendment, as Hobby called for a suffrage bill enfranchising women while disenfranchising resident aliens. House Speaker R. E. Thomason of El Paso drew on these themes in his inaugural address, calling for "simple even-handed justice" for the women of Texas, who aptly demonstrated in 1918 their ability to mark a ballot, "which is more than some foreigners can do who have in times past held the balance of political power in Texas." In advocating equal suffrage, Thomason linked domesticity, patriotism, and xenophobia, itself joined in the public consciousness with Fergusonism

²⁵ "Favorable Suffrage Report to be Made," *Dallas Morning News*, Jan. 19, 1919.

as “Kaiserism” and the pernicious influence of the brewery interests on Texas. To give women the ballot was to affirm the “Americanism” of the legislature; they also deserved it for their war service. “Some man has said that most legislation is a process of trading,” Thomason declared, “and if that be true, I hope this Legislature will trade off the illiterate foreigner who has corrupted so many of our elections for the pure, patriotic American woman.”²⁶

In the Senate, A. C. Buchanan of Bell County sponsored SJR 7, which was then assigned to Buchanan’s Committee on Constitutional Amendments. The bill reported favorably with an amendment altering the date of the referendum from May 24 to August 16. Without explanation, however, Buchanan dumped the amendment—thereby preserving the original election date—before it enjoyed unanimous passage.²⁷ In the House, HJR 3 also received the unanimous support of legislators following an amendment to its language submitted by Democrat Barry Miller of Dallas that restricted suffrage rights to native-born or fully naturalized American citizens.²⁸ The amendment proposed to alter even further the suffrage status quo in Texas, as resident aliens in the early stages of the application process for naturalization (so-called “first paper” aliens)

²⁶ Texas Legislature, House, *House Journal*, 36th Leg., Reg. Sess., 7. Hobby employed similar themes in his own address to both chambers, in which he submitted the amendment in its precise form “in the interest of a purer Americanism to limit suffrage to those who are full-fledged citizens,” and to extend it to women as a “fitting reward for duty well performed.” See Texas Legislature, House, *House Journal*, 36th Leg., Reg. Sess., 56-57.

²⁷ Texas Legislature, Senate, *Senate Journal*, 36th Leg., Reg. Sess., 14, 26, 73, 98, 120.

²⁸ Texas Legislature, House, *House Journal*, 36th Leg., Reg. Sess., 140-141.

retained voting privileges in the state. More than that, however, the alien clause threatened the success of the suffrage referendum in areas of the state in which ethnic European and Mexican communities remained politically influential. The women who stood to gain from the referendum could not support it, while the minority groups who stood to lose the franchise could oppose it.

With the federal amendment stalled in Congress, an incensed Cunningham, determined to make Hobby pay for this outrage, returned to Texas in February for the referendum campaign. Despite her disgust with the circumstances, she embraced the campaign with customary energy, employing what Judith McArthur describes as “a textbook NAWSA campaign in tactics.” Cunningham prepared countless detailed directives for distribution to each Senatorial district chairman, county chairman, and city president in the organization, and which described precisely the methods by which local suffragists were to educate their communities. Among their responsibilities, local leaders were to appoint county and precinct chairmen, conduct mass meetings and obtain speakers, gather signatures of women on petitions to be returned to Austin, canvass individual homes to determine which housed voters in support of suffrage, invite press coverage to every possible suffrage activity, and participate in the actual election, whether it be distributing literature within one hundred feet of the polling site or serving as an election officer.²⁹

²⁹ McArthur and Smith, *Minnie Fisher Cunningham*, 80; Circular from Cunningham to all Senatorial District Chairmen, County Chairmen, City Presidents (hereafter “Local Leadership”) and “others,” Mar. 14 1919, Folder 1, Box 2, JYM; Circular from Cunningham to “Suffragist,” Mar. 31, 1919, Folder 1, Box 2, JYM;

Election Day brought surprise and disappointment to the suffragists of rural Texas. Despite Kate Hunter's relentless campaigning in Anderson County, she was powerless to prevent the poor weather, which, coupled with the failure of election authorities to furnish four rural precincts with supplies to conduct the election, depressed turnout. The results were still close: despite early returns suggesting overwhelming victory for the suffrage amendment, it was ultimately defeated by a vote of 921 to 909. Prohibition succeeded by another narrow margin, with 874 voting in favor to 811 opposed. Although Palestine strongly supported the suffrage amendment, the rural precincts were nearly unanimous against it.³⁰ In Lampasas County, the suffrage amendment was soundly defeated by a vote of 553 to 410. Only two boxes, Lampasas No. 11 and Atherton, returned a favorable vote for the suffrage amendment; suffrage prevailed in Atherton by only one vote. In Lometa, where Lee Smith had just reported a favorable meeting, suffrage went down by a vote of 118 to 75.³¹ Early returns in Wharton County suggested strong majorities in favor of both amendments, but the final vote reflected the divisions within the county. El Campo, with turnout below forty percent, supported prohibition by a vote of 301 to 191, and suffrage 303 to 224.

Circular from Cunningham to Local Leadership, Apr. 15, 1919, Folder 1, Box 2, JYM; Circular from Cunningham to Local Leadership, May 17, 1919, Folder 1, Box 2, JYM.

³⁰ "Light Vote Today On the Amendments," *Palestine (Tex.) Daily Herald*, May 24, 1919; "City Favors the Amendments, and County Vote Lacking," *Palestine (Tex.) Daily Herald*, May 26, 1919; "Anderson County Votes Against the Suffrage Amendment," *Palestine (Tex.) Daily Herald*, May 28, 1919.

³¹ "Vote on Amendments," *Lampasas (Tex.) Leader*, May 30, 1919; "Complete Election Returns," *Lampasas (Tex.) Leader*, Jun. 13, 1919.

Wharton, where turnout reached eighty-five percent of all poll taxes paid that year, approved suffrage by a vote of 148 to 86, and prohibition 164 to 64. Late returns from the outlying communities, however, secured the defeat of the suffrage amendment by thirty votes.³²

Suffragists had cause to celebrate elsewhere, however, as the amendment prevailed. In Wilbarger County, voters returned a nearly two hundred-vote margin of victory for prohibition, and a relatively narrow victory—fifty-one votes—for the suffrage amendment. Strong support for each came from West Vernon, Harrold, Fargo, and to a lesser degree, Tolbert. Curiously, areas with active Hobby Clubs the previous year, including Oklaunion and Odell, saw the suffrage amendment defeated, albeit by small margins. Prohibition passed in all but two of the fifteen county precincts.³³ In Donley County, with about half of the voting strength of the county casting ballots, voters delivered large majorities in support of both the suffrage and prohibition amendments, which passed with margins of 150 and 250 votes respectively. In the Clarendon precinct, the prohibition vote was 161 in favor to 41 opposed, while suffrage prevailed by a vote of 152 to 63. Hedley delivered a 73-vote majority in favor of prohibition and endorsed suffrage by a vote of 81 to 31. Prohibition carried nine of the

³² “The Election,” *El Campo (Tex.) Citizen*, May 30, 1919; “Complete Election Returns on Constitutional Amendments,” *Dallas Morning News*, Jun. 15, 1919.

³³ “Vote Tomorrow on Four Amendments,” *Vernon (Tex.) Record*, May 23, 1919; “Favor Suffrage Prohibition and Home Ownership,” *Vernon (Tex.) Record*, May 27, 1919.

sixteen precincts in Donley County, while the suffrage amendment carried eight.³⁴ In Lamar County, the suffrage amendment eked out a victory by a margin of only six votes, while prohibition prevailed by more than six hundred. Brazos County returned solid majorities for both amendments, and in Cameron County, incomplete returns revealed public defiance of the Wells machine, with prohibition leading by a margin of more than one hundred votes, while suffrage led 473 in favor to 221 opposed. A few boxes remained out, however, and while the *Herald* expected the meager returns to “further cut down the suffrage and prohibition leads,” they did nothing to alter the final result, as suffrage succeeded by a vote of 473 to 221. In the Point Isabel precinct, fifty votes were cast against both prohibition and suffrage, with but one vote supporting prohibition and none for suffrage. This surprised local suffragists, who had “expectations...that at least there would be a few,” to support suffrage. Finally, Presidio County voters approved the suffrage amendment by a resounding majority of ninety votes; in fact, more voters cast their ballots on the suffrage question than on the prohibition amendment, although this can be partially attributed to the fact that no substantive antiprohibitionist sentiment existed in the county.³⁵

³⁴ “Prohibition Wins in State Suffrage Defeated—Donley Co. Gives Majorities to All,” *Clarendon (Tex.) News*, May 29, 1919; “Complete Returns on May 24th Election in Donley Co.—Home Ownership Has Narrow Lead,” *Clarendon (Tex.) News*, Jun. 5, 1919.

³⁵ Full election returns by county are available in “Complete Election Returns on Constitutional Amendments,” *Dallas Morning News*, Jun. 15, 1919. Specifics on Cameron County returns are found in “Suffrage Lead in County Is Growing,” *Brownsville (Tex.) Daily Herald*, May 26, 1919, and “One Pro Vote Is Cast at Isabel, None for Suffrage Amendment,” *Brownsville (Tex.) Daily Herald*, May 27, 1919.

Although the Texas suffragists employed NAWSA's strategy to the letter and Anna Howard Shaw delivered a successful lecture tour in Texas, the suffrage amendment lost statewide by over twenty-five thousand votes.³⁶ Some critics believed that the alien disenfranchisement addendum denied the suffragists the votes required for victory. Jane McCallum also credited a vigorous anti-suffrage propaganda effort, led by Pauline Wells, Ida Darden, and their allies among the "liquor interests." Cunningham, however, looked elsewhere. "I honestly think," she later wrote Carrie Chapman Catt, "that the German vote was not more effective against us than was the overconfidence of our friends."³⁷

As election irregularities began to appear across the state in traditionally anti-prohibitionist areas, Cunningham and NAWSA leaders began to suspect fraud. One example was the printing order of the ballot. The sample distributed by the Secretary of State's office before the election listed the suffrage amendment second; suffragists had therefore organized their campaign around support for "Amendment Two."³⁸ On Election Day, however, while pollwatchers dutifully reminded voters to support the second amendment, twenty-eight counties in East Texas—a redoubt of Fergusonism—used a ballot with the amendments in a different order. Suffragists also eyed with interest the tardiness of the returns that ultimately defeated the amendment, while TESA

³⁶ Taylor, "The Woman Suffrage Movement in Texas," 46. See also "Complete Election returns on Constitutional Amendments," *Dallas Morning News*, Jun. 15, 1919.

³⁷ Harper, et al., ed., *History of Woman Suffrage*, VI: 642; McArthur and Smith, *Minnie Fisher Cunningham*, 82.

³⁸ A copy of the sample ballot is available in Folder 2, Box 3, JYM.

headquarters received additional reports of unguarded ballot boxes and polls that never opened to receive voters.³⁹

With Anderson County the last to report its returns to the state, League pursued samples of the ballots used in Palestine and surrounding counties from Kate Hunter. Citing altered ballots in Travis County, League pressed Hunter for a quick reply. Hunter responded on June 5 that the printer had only blank ballots left, but had “printed the Amendments in the order of the official ballot.” Hunter, whose music instruction now consumed most of her time, balked at a challenge of the results: “I do not know what evidence you have, but I should think a contest would make enemies for us [and] not accomplish the desired result, if the evidence is as fragmentary as it is from this county.” The elections had indeed been held “in a loose manner, to put it mildly,” and she mentioned the precincts that had received no supplies, but her language suggests clear doubts about overt fraud in Anderson County.⁴⁰

Eddie Brite wrote Cunningham from Marfa shortly after the election, hopeful “that Equal Suffrage would surely win,” but sharing Cunningham’s suspicions that “some discrepancies...[were] forcing us to lose.” The women of Marfa “tried to do our best and the women and best citizens here were faithful to the cause.” She and Luke Brite remained interested, and they offered two hundred dollars to any legal effort to contest the vote. A fuming but grateful Cunningham replied that the TESA executive

³⁹ McArthur and Smith, *Minnie Fisher Cunningham*, 82.

⁴⁰ Edith Hinkle League to Kate Hunter, May 31, 1919, Folder 3, Box 47, JYM; Kate Hunter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Jun. 5, 1919, Folder 3, Box 47, JYM.

board would soon meet to consider challenging the results. She congratulated Brite on the “success of the battle in your particular sector. It must be very comforting to know that the unit for which you were responsible won, and so your ‘conscience is clear’ of the defeat as a whole however much you may regret it.” Cunningham sarcastically reviewed the “many interesting aspects” of the returns. The amendment generally prevailed throughout the Rio Grande Valley “from El Paso to Brownsville;” the suffragists won almost the entire Gulf Coast; they delivered West Texas “practically solidly;” and yet the “real surprise and terrible shock was that we lost the state thro [sic] the majorities which piled up against us in North and East Texas prohibition counties. It was here that the crooked ballot was used against us. It was here that we felt justified in hoping for help to offset the German counties, and I’ll never believe that we lost that good American territory by fair means.” A review of voting statistics in county census data finally convinced Cunningham to attribute the defeat to the “German vote.”⁴¹

Despite mounting evidence of fraud, the TESA never had time to act on its suspicions. The federal suffrage amendment narrowly passed in the U. S. Senate on June 4; both Senators from Texas—Morris Sheppard and Charles Culberson—supported it. It was then delivered to the state legislatures for ratification. “Glory be!” an amused Kate Hunter exclaimed to Cunningham, “The Federal Amendment went through... To think of big Texas, progressive Texas, having to be hauled in on a Federal amendment!”

⁴¹ Mrs. L. C. Brite to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Jun. 2, 1919, Folder 110, Box 8, MFC, microfilm reel 3; Minnie Fisher Cunningham to Mrs. L. C. Brite, Jun. 7, 1919, Folder 110, Box 8, MFC, microfilm reel 3; McArthur and Smith, *Minnie Fisher Cunningham*, 83.

Hobby had already called a special session of the legislature for June 23 to deal with appropriations, but suffragists commandeered the session from the opening gavel. Ratification in Texas had become critically important to the federal amendment, as NAWSA recognized that, with thirty-six of the forty-eight states required to secure ratification, unified southern opposition would doom it. With Texas women already enjoying primary voting rights, defeat in Texas would deal a catastrophic blow to the public perception of the amendment in battleground states. Cunningham's daunting task was thus to break the "solid South" by securing ratification in the state legislature, a responsibility Catt described as "the most ticklish job and the most crucial problem of any of the states at this moment."⁴²

The ratification question required different tactics than the referendum campaign—McArthur and Smith compare the "grinding months" of the referendum effort to the "six days of intense drama" required for ratification. Suffragists and antisuffragists alike descended upon Austin to make their final stand. Cunningham, now fully deploying the sophisticated array of political skills cultivated over her years of public activism, felt "fairly sure" of majorities in both houses, but her confidence was higher in the House than in the Senate, where she had a slim margin of support, and fretted about the tactics of the "antis" who would likely attempt to "out general us and split our forces on some technicality or side issue." Indeed, the resolution sailed through

⁴² Harper, et al., eds., *History of Woman Suffrage*, VI: 642-643; "Special Session to be Called June 16," *Dallas Morning News*, Feb. 25, 1919; McArthur and Smith, *Minnie Fisher Cunningham*, 83-84. Kate Hunter's remarks are in Kate Hunter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Jun. 5, 1919, Folder 3, Box 47, JYM.

the House on June 24 by a vote of 96 to 20, with no representative from the counties in this study voting against it. The state Senate had scheduled a committee hearing for that afternoon, giving both sides “no thought of lunch but only to hurry to...the far removed wing of the Capitol” for the event.⁴³

McCallum recalled the hearing as an event that “can never be adequately described.” Led by Senator J. C. McNealus of Dallas, the anti-suffragists mounted a feverish campaign to derail ratification in the upper house, introducing a resolution in committee requiring a voter referendum on ratification; this doubtless would have afforded opponents the opportunity to deploy the same fraudulent maneuvers the suffragists had detected on May 24. The argument to let the public have the final decision on ratification persuaded nominally pro-suffrage senators, who decided to support the referendum resolution if it came up for a vote first. The committee declared it out of order, however, by a vote of 4 to 1. McNealus then unleashed a passionate tirade against suffrage, echoed by former Congressman Robert L. Henry of Waco. After three hours of belligerent deliberations, the committee reported the ratification resolution favorably to the Senate floor, where “the real fight was on.”⁴⁴

Opponents of ratification, including McNealus, Archie Parr, and W. L. Hall, tried “every conceivable method to defer or defeat” the resolution on the Senate floor, but

⁴³ McArthur and Smith, *Minnie Fisher Cunningham*, 84; Harper, et al., eds., *History of Woman Suffrage*, VI: 642.

⁴⁴ Harper, et al., eds., *History of Woman Suffrage*, VI: 642-643; “Senate Committee Votes to Report Amendment Favorably,” *Dallas Morning News*, Jun. 25, 1919.

“heckling, threats, [and] fervid oratory” did little to sway convinced supporters of equal suffrage. The antis filibustered the bill throughout June 25 and 26, with pro-suffrage forces finally breaking the filibuster in the evening of June 27, but not before McNealus, Hall, and Fayette County Senator I. E. Clark introduced an outrageous and largely ignored resolution calling for the entire Texas legislature to resign from office, and participate in a special election in which each candidate would run solely on the question of ratifying the Susan B. Anthony amendment. The bill passed to a third reading by a vote of 18 to 9 and the Senate scheduled the final vote for the following day, whereupon the antis attempted that night to break quorum by putting sympathetic Senators on the night train out of town. The suffragists anticipated this desperate move, posted guards at the train station, and thwarted the attempt. The following day, with McNealus, Parr, and other proven suffrage opponents mysteriously absent, the Senate approved ratification by a voice vote of 19 to 10, and Texas became the first southern state and the ninth in the country to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.⁴⁵

Cunningham later estimated that this time the error of overconfidence plagued the antis’ cause; so concerned were they with concealing the fraud of May 24, she reckoned, that they delayed their reaction to the ratification process. The suffragists, for their part, went to work “the day after we knew we had lost our referendum” by lining up legislative support and forging alliances with influential men. Although the national

⁴⁵ McArthur and Smith, *Minnie Fisher Cunningham*, 84; Harper, et al., eds., *History of Woman Suffrage*, VI: 642-643. The frenetic activity on the Senate floor is documented in Texas Legislature, Senate, *Senate Journal*, 36th Leg., 2nd Called Sess., 24-29, 44-45, 51. The individual votes were not recorded in the journal, but given W. L. Hall’s consistent opposition to suffrage, he likely joined those voting against ratification.

contest for the franchise continued, the battle for Texas had been won. In what appears to be one of her final communications with Minnie Fisher Cunningham, the woman for whom and with whom she fought so valiantly, Kate Hunter wrote on June 28:

Here's to the Victory Ratification! Let me congratulate you on the climax of many well spent years in suffrage work—such sacrifices and such discouragement that only a suffragist understands.

The end is here for Texas, and Texas women may again hold up their heads, for since that last amendment I've been ashamed. All honor to you and to all the women who have fought so courageously.⁴⁶

The steadily dissipating opposition to equal suffrage within the Texas legislature was the product not only of compelling rhetorical justifications, but also of political pragmatism. Although “true believers” did occupy each chamber, Texas legislators were moved more by the prospects for re-election that woman voters afforded them than by any belief in gender or political equality. In few cases did the activism of local suffragists elicit a change in any legislator's views on the suffrage question. Even José Canales personally believed women entitled to the ballot; the petitions sent him in 1918 from the San Benito ESA did not change his mind; they did, however, allow him to change his vote in the belief that he had the support of a broad segment of his constituency. Nor did a candidate's views on suffrage appear to influence his prospects for election, as non-incumbents in the counties treated here rarely took a public position on suffrage during their campaigns.

Despite efforts to influence the decisions of their representatives in Austin, suffragists in rural Texas typically failed to change either the minds or the votes of their

⁴⁶ McArthur and Smith, *Minnie Fisher Cunningham*, 84; Kate Hunter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Jun. 28, 1919, Folder 76, Box 6, MFC, microfilm reel 3.

legislators. Only Canales proved directly responsive in any way to the petitions of local suffragists. Certain candidates, of course, did publicly declare their intentions to support equal suffrage legislation in their respective chambers. In some cases, such as Hill Walters of Anderson County and E. A. Decherd, Jr. of Brazos County—both of whom had pledged their support to equal suffrage before assuming office—some marginal influence on their votes may be attributed to the pressure applied by suffragists attempting to force a public position on suffrage before the election. Suffragists proved completely unable, however, to either convince or replace lawmakers hostile to equal suffrage; legislators in either house who opposed suffrage upon election around or after 1915 consistently rejected suffrage legislation.

The composition of the districts represented by rural legislators affected both their voting habits on suffrage and the suffragists' ability to influence them. The Senatorial districts in particular often encompassed both rural and urban counties; the lawmaker therefore responded more to his urban constituency than to the rural voters on the periphery of his district and political consciousness. In the counties of this study, the Senatorial districts including Lampasas, Presidio, and Wharton counties all included major metropolitan centers—Austin, El Paso, and Galveston, respectively. Elizabeth Cline identified this issue with W. L. Hall, who, despite growing pro-suffrage sentiment in Wharton County, could confidently and consistently oppose suffrage as an expression of the will of his Galvestonian constituents, who rejected the 1919 suffrage

referendum.⁴⁷ So, too, was Lampasas Senator Walter D. Caldwell bound to express the political will of his Austin constituents, who also opposed suffrage in the 1919 referendum. The lone exception to this tendency was District 25 Senator R. M. Dudley, who represented El Paso as well as Presidio County, and voted in favor of ratifying the Anthony amendment. Unlike their urban counterparts elsewhere in Texas, however, the voters of El Paso approved the May 24 suffrage referendum, so Dudley's support was doubtless an extension of that vote.

The voting patterns among the representatives of the counties in this study reflect broader habits among Texas lawmakers, as urban political values also intersected ethnic and racial issues in determining the suffrage vote in the Texas legislature. Consistently, opposition to equal suffrage in the Senate coalesced around areas demonstrating not only the highest urban concentrations in the state, but also those with the highest Mexican, Mexican-American, and ethnic German concentrations. Beginning in 1917, the year in which the first viable equal suffrage legislation was introduced in the Senate, an anti-suffrage coalition comprising senators from districts including Travis, Harris, Bexar, Galveston, Dallas, El Paso, Guadalupe, Fayette, Washington, Duval and Cameron Counties emerged and continued through the ratification vote on the Anthony amendment in 1919. In the House, where districts aligned closely to individual counties, votes more directly represented local attitudes towards equal suffrage. This was

⁴⁷ Elizabeth Cline to Edith Hinkle League, n. d., Folder 120, Box 8, MFC, microfilm reel 4. Cline also attributed Hall's support for Hobby to this fact. "Hall is trying to pretend he is for Hobby but he is not," she explained to League in July 1918, "in his heart and Galveston county can certainly make the telling vote."

certainly the case in the vote to ratify the Anthony amendment, as ninety percent of the votes cast against ratification came from legislators representing counties in which voters had opposed the May 24 suffrage referendum.⁴⁸

Race and ethnicity alone, however, are insufficient indicators of the strength of the suffrage movement in the counties of this study. Counties with voting populations dominated by native or naturalized citizens were no more likely to approve the 1919 suffrage referendum than those with greater concentrations of aliens. The majorities returned either in support or opposition to the suffrage amendment, moreover, also defy categorization along strictly racial and ethnic lines. In Anderson and Lampasas, where the percentage of native whites within the electorate exceeded ninety-five percent, the suffrage referendum was defeated with fifty-three and fifty-seven percent majorities, respectively. The amendment passed with only a fifty-three percent majority in Wilbarger County, where native or naturalized whites comprised ninety-eight percent of eligible voters. Similarly, in Lamar County, where native or naturalized whites comprised ninety-nine percent of the electorate, the referendum passed by a margin of six votes—out of over 2,700 ballots cast. In Presidio County, possessing with Cameron County the largest minority populations among the counties in this study, the referendum prevailed with over eighty percent of the popular vote.⁴⁹ In fact, only in Cameron

⁴⁸ Texas Legislature, House, *House Journal*, 36th Leg., 2nd Called Sess., 103-104.

⁴⁹ Unnaturalized and “first paper” aliens in Presidio and Cameron Counties comprised thirty-nine and thirty-five percent, respectively, of the eligible electorate in 1920. See University of Virginia Geospatial & Statistical Data Center Historical Census Browser, <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html>, U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1920 (accessed March 12, 2006).

County did election returns correlate with demographic tendencies, as the referendum passed with a sixty-three percent majority in a county where native or naturalized whites commanded a sixty-five percent majority of the eligible electorate.

None of these factors, however, explain the unanimous passage in both houses of the bill authorizing the referendum election of May 24, 1919. This singular occasion on which suffrage legislation met no resistance in either chamber, despite the presence and votes of proven and avowed enemies of equal suffrage, seems best explained by the confidence of suffrage opponents that the early date, the problems posed by the fifth Liberty Loan campaign, the confused suffragist objectives of state versus federal amendment, and the deliberate linkage of woman suffrage with alien disfranchisement would devastate any real prospect that the referendum would succeed. They therefore supported the bill to ensure that the almost insurmountable obstacles created by its language and timing remained intact.

Ultimately, practical political considerations informed the actions of Texas legislators on the suffrage question between 1915 and 1919; despite the restless and laudable efforts of suffragists to write, meet, telephone, telegram, and even threaten their representatives, suffrage legislation gained little traction in either chamber until the spectre of Fergusonism frightened lawmakers into passing the primary suffrage bill in March 1918. This act of *realpolitik* was easily masked by the patriotic rhetoric then invoked in discussions of war work by organized Texas womanhood, and gave lawmakers adequate public cover for passing such a dramatic political reform. Equally useful was the nativism to which lawmakers and suffragists alike pandered in order to

persuade Texans of the virtue of granting women the ballot. Substituting the image of the “pure, patriotic American woman” for the “illiterate foreigner” muted for Texans the cultural challenge inherent in granting women a measure of political power, and produced for Texas suffragists the desired ends, if not necessarily by the intended means.

CHAPTER VI

IDENTIFYING FACTORS FOR SUCCESS AND FAILURE IN THE RURAL SUFFRAGE CAMPAIGN

In a 1992 study on suffrage activism in Galveston, Elizabeth Hayes Turner argued that “the movement for the vote among women in the South at the local level was an urban-based phenomenon.” The stability of the woman suffrage movement required an urban culture in which a dense women’s organizational network translated into a coherent suffrage advocacy organization. Urban suffrage associations, through their publicity work and fundraising, in turn stabilized the Texas Equal Suffrage Association, and therefore supplied a support structure for the entire movement in Texas.¹ Additional studies on organizational woman’s culture in Dallas and Houston have affirmed this conclusion, demonstrating the existence of a dense network of interconnected urban women bound by common participation in one or more of the evangelical or secular women’s organizations in their communities.² Suffrage associations in urban centers drew their members and supporters from this network; though individual women’s

¹ Elizabeth Hayes Turner, “‘White-Gloved Ladies’ and ‘New Women’ in the Texas Woman Suffrage Movement,” in *Southern Women: Histories and Identities*, ed. Virginia Bernhard, et al. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992), 137, 155-156.

² Betty T. Chapman, “From the Parlor to the Public: New Roles for Women in Houston, 1885-1918,” *Houston Review* 15, No. 1 (1993): 31-44; Janelle D. Scott, “Local Leadership in the Woman Suffrage Movement: Houston’s Campaign for the Vote 1917-1918,” *Houston Review* 12, No. 1 (1990): 3-22; Patricia Evridge Hill, “Women’s Groups and the Extension of City Services in Early Twentieth-Century Dallas,” *East Texas Historical Journal* 30, No. 1 (1992): 3-10.

organizations might supply a preponderance of members for a suffrage group, women joined the suffrage campaign from differing quarters of the city's organizational life.

In rural Texas, neither evangelical nor secular women's organizational culture successfully birthed a coherent, sustainable woman suffrage organization after 1914. The absence of such an organization permitted local factors specific to each community, county, or region to play decisive roles in the outcome of the woman suffrage campaign. In some counties, only the tenacious commitment and resourcefulness of individual suffragists allowed the movement to survive from 1915 to 1919, though their efforts did not always deliver success. In others, patterns of nineteenth century settlement and the cultural paradigms shaped accordingly seemingly influenced the outcome of the suffrage campaign. Residents in still other rural counties viewed the woman question through the prism of frontier life, itself informed in Texas by the practical demands of a ranch economy. Finally, boss rule and the politics of race in South Texas played a role in the fate of woman suffrage in the Valley more critical than any activity on the part of suffrage activists.

In the absence of a sustained organizational effort, local interest in woman suffrage was stimulated in rural Texas only by the direct intervention of TESA through speakers of state or national repute and the distribution of prosuffrage literature. Speaking engagements by TESA leaders Annette Finnigan, Perle Penfield, Elizabeth Freeman, Anna Howard Shaw, Lutie Stearns, Lavinia Engle, Helen Todd, and Minnie Fisher Cunningham offered an umbilical cord for rural suffragists, typically drawing large, spirited crowds and injecting—however temporarily—new passion into the

suffrage campaign. In the interim, enthusiasm for the cause waned among all but the most dedicated women, compounding the difficulties already faced by suffragists immersed in a culture hostile to their ambitions.

A compelling speaker often inspired the immediate organization of a suffrage association among audience members. In Wharton County, Perle Penfield's address in July 1914 prompted El Campo women to create an eight-member suffrage committee, the membership of which swelled to almost forty after Penfield spoke again that evening in a local park.³ In the east Wharton County hamlet of Hungerford, Helen Moore successfully organized a suffrage club of twenty-four following a speech by Lavinia Engle.⁴ Anderson County women reacted to a January 1915 speech by Minnie Fisher Cunningham by organizing the Palestine Equal Suffrage Association.⁵ In Cameron County, Lutie Stearns' 1917 visit energized the community of Brownsville. Frances Heywood reported to Cunningham in March, "since Miss Stearns' visit...suffrage seems

³ El Campo Report, n. d., Folder 7a, Box 10b, Jane Yelvington McCallum Papers (Austin History Center, Austin Public Library, Austin, Tex.; hereinafter JYM), Part II; "Report of Work Summer of 1914," n. d., Folder 8b, Box 10b, JYM, Part II.

⁴ Helen Moore to Corinne Fullerton, Mar. 20, 1916, Folder 5, Box 59, JYM; "To Lecture on Suffrage," *Wharton (Tex.) Spectator*, Mar. 24, 1916; "Suffrage Lecture," *Wharton (Tex.) Spectator*, Mar. 31, 1916; Helen Moore to Corinne Fullerton, Apr. 3, 1916, Folder 5, Box 59, JYM; Helen Moore to Minnie Hinkle, Apr. 5, 1916, Folder 5, Box 59, JYM.

⁵ "Equal Suffrage Society Formed," *Palestine (Tex.) Daily Herald*, Jan. 15, 1915.

to have awakened somewhat and I believe we will now have some good organization in the Valley.”⁶

Speakers could induce rural Texans to other forms of action on the suffrage question. Lutie Stearns, for example, moved a Lamar County audience in January 1917 to ratify a petition demanding that the Texas legislature call a referendum on equal suffrage.⁷ In communities where existing suffrage groups languished from inertia, TESA speakers often prodded them back to life. Such was the case in Lampasas, where Elizabeth Freeman’s March 1916 address to a “fairly well filled room” of men and women energized the Lampasas ESA: “our organization was at a stand still when she came,” President Lee Lytton Smith wrote Cunningham, “but has now put on new life. Almost every one who only came to hear [Freeman] thru curiosity were [*sic*] converted and gave us their name for membership.”⁸

Rural suffragists realized the power that capable speakers had over the fortunes of their movement, soliciting speaking engagements from TESA at every opportunity. Pattie Sims of Bryan gave in late 1914 a dim assessment of the prospects for an equal suffrage campaign in Brazos County, but thought that an eloquent speaker “might secure

⁶ Frances Heywood to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, n. d., Folder 49, Box 4, Minnie Fisher Cunningham Papers (Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library, Houston, Tex.; hereinafter MFC), microfilm reel 2.

⁷ “Local News Notes,” *Paris (Tex.) Morning News*, Jan. 20, 1917; “Society and club Notes,” *Paris (Tex.) Morning News*, Jan. 21, 1917.

⁸ “Lampasas Women on the Firing Line,” *Lampasas (Tex.) Leader*, Mar. 24, 1916; Mrs. Lee Lytton Smith to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Apr. 10, 1916, Folder 6, Box 15b, JYM, Part II.

many converts.”⁹ She was right; a February 1915 address on woman suffrage by Mrs. L. H. Wallace, the President of the Women’s Political Union of Houston, led to the formation of the Bryan Equal Suffrage Association.¹⁰ In Palestine, Kate Hunter worked feverishly in late January 1915 to secure Helen Todd’s speaking services, certain that “without a speaker we can not hope to do much in so short a time.”¹¹ After the 1919 referendum, suffragists and observers alike allocated some responsibility for the defeat to a shortage of speakers. The Brownsville *Herald* called for “more speakers, more posters, more and better advertising.”¹² Frances Heywood concurred, writing Cunningham that the county was “asleep” and needed “outside speakers [and] enthusiasm.”¹³

For some communities, the suffrage effort survived only through the dogged determination of individual suffragists to sustain it. This was the case in Brazos County, where, despite an active women’s organizational network in the community and a Woman’s Club prominent in both Bryan and the state, Pattie Sims led an unorganized

⁹ Mrs. M. W. Sims to Annette Finnigan, Dec. 12, 1914, Folder 2, Box 10a, JYM, Part II.

¹⁰ “Suffrage League Organized,” *Bryan (Tex.) Daily Eagle*, Feb. 19, 1915.

¹¹ “Miss Helen Todd Will Be Invited Here,” *Palestine (Tex.) Daily Herald*, Jan. 22, 1915; Kate Hunter to Annette Finnigan, Jan. 22, 1915, Folder 1, Box 10a, JYM, Part II.

¹² “Splendid Showing for Woman Suffrage,” *Brownsville (Tex.) Daily Herald*, May 26, 1919.

¹³ Frances Heywood to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Jun. 7, 1919, Folder 85, Box 6, MFC, microfilm reel 3.

effort to preach the suffrage gospel to her neighbors and friends. She conceded to Annette Finnigan in 1914 that, as an “enthusiastic suffragist,” she was “alone in this class here in Bryan—or rather the other Women have not the courage of their convictions.”¹⁴ Shortly after the Bryan ESA organized in February 1915, Pattie Sims contributed on behalf of eight members two dollars to TESA. The following year, Sims enclosed an embarrassingly small dues payment with the confession that “our Club has dwindled into a mere ‘Corporal’s guard.’”¹⁵

The Bryan ESA remained an organization in name only throughout the campaign. College Station suffragist and local W.C.T.U. Franchise Superintendent Bertha Lee Broyles criticized the Bryan ESA in November 1917 as “the organization which never meets, nor does anything” despite her claim that “the women are very aggressive and the time is ripe to arouse their ideas of citizenship.” Opposition to suffrage existed in the community, and Broyles wished “something could be done.”¹⁶ Little had changed by 1919, when Broyles reported in April of the “great need of

¹⁴ Pattie Sims to Annette Finnigan, Dec. 12, 1914, Folder 2, Box 10a, JYM, Part II.

¹⁵ Treasurer’s Book, Folder 4, Box 6, JYM, Part I; Pattie Sims to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Undated, Folder 6, Box 15b, JYM, Part II.

¹⁶ Bertha Lee Broyles to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Nov. 19, 1917, Folder 36, Box 4, MFC, microfilm reel 2.

Suffrage work” in Brazos County, where “the subject is comparatively new to a good many of our people.”¹⁷

What suffrage advocacy did occur in Brazos County was largely the product of Pattie Sims’ efforts. Sims ran as often as possible reminders in the Bryan *Daily Eagle* of upcoming suffrage events. She organized a debate on woman suffrage in a March 1916 Woman’s Club meeting.¹⁸ In that same month, she organized and advertised a poorly attended speaking engagement for TESA Speaker Elizabeth Freeman in Bryan.¹⁹ She took the lead in distributing literature and accepted visible leadership roles among local women during the First World War. The final returns for the 1919 referendum election also suggest that her individual influence played a key role in the success of the suffrage amendment there; among the 686 favorable votes cast in the county, 225 were cast at the county courthouse in Precinct Eleven. An additional 112 favorable votes came from adjacent Precinct Ten.²⁰ Sims and her fellow suffragists, who, though officers of the Bryan ESA, never acted publicly as representatives of that organization, all lived in Precinct Eleven. With no viable suffrage organization in the community, it fell to individual suffragists to secure public support for reform.

¹⁷ Bertha Lee Broyles to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Apr. 7, 1919, Box 6, Folder 83, MFC, microfilm reel 2.

¹⁸ Minutes, Mar. 15, 1916, Woman’s Club of Bryan Papers (Woman’s Club of Bryan, Bryan, Tex.).

¹⁹ *Bryan (Tex.) Daily Eagle*, Mar. 28-29, 1916.

²⁰ *Record of Election Returns, 1912-1946*, County Clerk, Brazos County Courthouse, Bryan, Tex.

In Anderson County, Kate Hunter sustained the suffrage movement practically alone. Mrs. Ned B. Morris warned TESA Field Organizer Perle Penfield in 1914 of the “considerable prejudice” against suffrage typical in many southern communities in Palestine, but she remained optimistic that she could “organize a good club here.”²¹ A promising start for the Palestine ESA, however, quickly succumbed to inertia; Hunter could not attend the 1916 Democratic National Convention in St. Louis because the Palestine ESA was “not able financially (they are able but they won’t work) to pay a delegate’s expenses.”²² Later that year Hunter fairly burst with enthusiasm over the prospect of entering a suffrage float into a Fourth of July parade sure to be “the biggest thing ever staged in Palestine.”²³ The parade was a “howling success,” and the suffrage float took first prize, neither of which consoled a frustrated Hunter, who confided to Cunningham, “there were only two ladies to help me [complete the float, and] they helped only a little.” The greatest outrage for Hunter, however, was the fact that “not a member of the Ass’n would ride on the float. The young ladies [who accompanied Hunter] were . . . my pupils [and] rode to accommodate me personally.”²⁴

²¹ Mrs. N. B. Morris to Perle Penfield, Sep. 1, 1914, Folder 1, Box 10a, JYM, Part II.

²² Kate Hunter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, May 23, 1916, Folder 3, Box 47, JYM.

²³ Kate Hunter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Jun. 19, 1916, Folder 3, Box 47, JYM.

²⁴ Kate Hunter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Jul. 12, 1916, Folder 3, Box 47, JYM.

By 1917, Hunter was forced to announce “the death of the Pal. Equal Suffrage Ass’n. They have been trying for over a year now and there is no use to do anything else.” Hunter could hardly muster any members to contribute to the National Surgical Dressing Committee, much less pursue suffrage work. Despite Cunningham’s hopeful words that the organization was only in “eclipse,” Hunter had “given up on the question in Palestine,” a defeat “worse than the death of a friend, for my heart was so wrapped up in the work.”²⁵ Even the sudden interest in the Hobby Clubs failed to resuscitate the official Palestine suffrage organization. Hunter reported in June 1918 that the Palestine ESA “is about played out. We don’t meet. Just about 3 or 4 women who came, so we decided not to do anything but war work. We have the same officers [and] are an organization [and] that is all.”²⁶ Updating Cunningham in May 1919, Hunter continued to complain, “the women here are absolutely indifferent.” She marveled at Cunningham’s progress, since “there are only a few to do anything—just like it is here.” Hunter’s recent attempt to collect funds from local women failed; “none of the women’s organizations contributed,” she wrote, though she “spoke before every women’s organization in town but two.”²⁷ Even the few women Hunter mustered to collect

²⁵ Kate Hunter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Sep. 24, 1917, Folder 50, Box 4, MFC, microfilm reel 2; Minnie Fisher Cunningham to Kate Hunter, Sep. 26, 1917, Folder 50, Box 4, MFC, microfilm reel 2.

²⁶ Kate Hunter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Jun. 1918, Folder 76, Box 6, MFC, microfilm reel 3.

²⁷ Kate Hunter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, May 10, 1919, Folder 3, Box 47, JYM.

petition signatures before the May 24 referendum refused to do so “unless they could have carried the Liberty Loan literature.”²⁸

Similar problems plagued Ella Pomeroy’s work in South Texas, where, despite the largest urban concentration in any of the counties in this study, Cameron County women demonstrated only sporadic interest in suffrage activism. Pomeroy explained to Helen Moore in May 1916 that Valley residents were “poor and indifferent,” and the distance between the Valley and the urban centers of the state made it “difficult to connect up with the moving world here.” The influence of the Wells machine blocked every attempt to mobilize local women for suffrage work. “Every woman whose name I get writes me that she can’t,” Pomeroy reported, “but perhaps Mrs. — — will. And so it goes.”²⁹ Later that month Pomeroy blamed the weather: “the sun is glaring; and the people are absolutely indifferent. The one woman I did scare up has written that the town is in the hands of politicians who give out jobs on which at least half of the people live; and they are afraid to have any ideas. The heat takes the spunk out of the folks, and their poverty and fear do the rest.”³⁰

Unlike the other rural counties in this study, however, certain Cameron County women did make some attempts at formal organization. Under Frances Heywood, wife of San Benito founder Alba Heywood, a San Benito Equal Suffrage Association did

²⁸ Kate Hunter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, May 14, 1919, Folder 3, Box 47, JYM.

²⁹ Ella Pomeroy to Helen Moore, May 10, 1916, Folder 6, Box 59, JYM.

³⁰ Ella Pomeroy to Helen Moore, May 30, 1916, Folder 6, Box 59, JYM.

form after Lutie Stearns' visit in March 1917, with a portion of its membership comprising women also engaged in the Woman's Department Club of San Benito. Heywood was somewhat territorial, and appears reluctant to cooperate with Pomeroy, a situation explained by Pomeroy to Cunningham as "characteristic of the lady...the Heywoods won't play unless they run thing [*sic*]." ³¹ Heywood was nonetheless passionate; she exclaimed to Edith Hinkle League, "we are going to make this a strong organization...[and] an incentive to the rest of the Valley." ³² Initially, Heywood appeared to be right; the San Benito ESA claimed fifty members by the end of April 1917, with "an active membership committee, who will not stop until their efforts are exhausted." ³³ In Brownsville, an Equal Suffrage Association organized sometime in late spring 1917, led by President Ruth Finch Holland and Secretary/Treasurer Anna R. Kelly. The organization devoted its initial activity on White Zone work and food conservation, but planned to pursue all of its activities as official organizational work. ³⁴ Pomeroy was stunned to hear not only that Brownsville women had organized, but also

³¹ Ella Pomeroy to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Nov. 7, 1916, Folder 5, Box 61, JYM.

³² Mrs. Alba Heywood to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, n. d., Folder 49, Box 4, MFC, microfilm reel 2.

³³ Mrs. Alba Heywood to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Apr. 27, 1917, Folder 49, Box 4, MFC, microfilm reel 2.

³⁴ Edith Hinkle League to Mrs. R. E. Holland, Jun. 13, 1917, Folder 50, Box 4, MFC, microfilm reel 2; Ruth Finch Holland to Edith Hinkle League, Jun. 18, 1917, Folder 50, Box 4, MFC, microfilm reel 2; Edith Hinkle League to Mrs. R. E. Holland, Jul. 5, 1917, Folder 50, Box 4, MFC, microfilm reel 2.

that they had contacted Cunningham: “So they invited her to speak, did they? The world do move!”³⁵

Neither of these organizations, however, managed to sustain interest among local women in the equal suffrage campaign. The San Benito association appeared promising: the women of the San Benito ESA mailed prosuffrage petitions to House Representative José T. Canales, brought Canales to address a meeting of the Rio Grande Valley Federation of Women’s Clubs, with which the San Benito ESA affiliated, and inquired into the details of registering women to vote in the 1918 primary.³⁶ After the primary election, however, the San Benito ESA appears to have collapsed. The president of the association, Mrs. A. R. Sprague, whom Heywood once described as a “very sincere [and] interested” woman, resigned her office and moved to California.³⁷ The next contact TESA leaders had with the San Benito ESA came from Heywood, who returned from an extended trip in 1919 to discover TESA correspondence accumulated in her parlor. In a startling and illuminating reply, Heywood informed Cunningham, “We have been without organization here [and] have been for two or three years. Individually

³⁵ Edith Hinkle League to Ella Pomeroy, Nov. 22, 1917, Folder 6, Box 9, JYM; Ella Pomeroy to Edith Hinkle League, Nov. 23, 1917, Folder 6, Box 9, JYM.

³⁶ Mrs. Alba Heywood to “Mrs. Minnie Cunningham Fisher,” Mar. 12, 1918, Folder 49, Box 4, MFC, microfilm reel 2; “San Benito is Entertaining Valley Women,” *Brownsville (Tex.) Herald*, May 14, 1918; “Mrs. Cowgill Elected Head of Federation,” *Brownsville (Tex.) Herald*, May 15, 1918; Mrs. Perry A. Welty to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Jun. 1, 1918, Folder 85, Box 6, MFC, microfilm reel 3.

³⁷ Sprague, to whom the TESA had forwarded a steady supply of suffrage literature, wrote headquarters in April 1919 to inform them of her status. Sprague asked Cunningham to direct all further correspondence to Heywood. See Mrs. A. R. Sprague to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Apr. 9, 1919, Folder 85, Box 6, MFC, microfilm reel 3.

many of us are interested. ...We have been under boss rule so long, we are asleep.” For her part, Heywood remained “keenly interested,” but health concerns prohibited any active effort.³⁸

Brownsville suffragists, on the other hand, met only with repeated failures in their endeavor to stimulate local interest. Pomeroy observed in April 1919 that the suffrage campaign in Cameron County had effectively died: “Not sign [*sic*] of life down here . . . and not a line of printed matter—not a petition here.”³⁹ Evidently contributing to the growing inertia was the election in early 1919 of Mrs. Wilmer Threadgill as President of the Rio Grande Valley Federation of Women’s Clubs. Pomeroy had a low opinion of Threadgill, who “refuses to do anything whatever” for the suffrage campaign, and the Federation itself, which she criticized as “not sufficiently interesting to make one WANT the job of president.”⁴⁰ Anna Kelly’s attempts to conduct a campaign for the May 1919 referendum met with “little encouragement [and] practically no help from the county.”⁴¹ She continued to work, printing prosuffrage letters from AEF soldiers in the Brownsville *Herald*, securing male speakers for audiences in the local cinemas, and obtaining a site for an election-day headquarters. On May 22, having “labored to the length of my ability [and] strength,” Kelly notified Cunningham that she still had “not

³⁸ Frances Heywood to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Jun. 7, 1919, Folder 85, Box 6, MFC, microfilm reel 3.

³⁹ Ella Pomeroy to “My dear People,” Apr. 9, 1919, Folder 6, Box 9, JYM.

⁴⁰ Ella Pomeroy to Edith Hinkle League, Jan. 25, 1919, Folder 6, Box 9, JYM.

⁴¹ Anna R. Kelly to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, May 4, 1919, Folder 85, Box 6, MFC, microfilm reel 3.

secured co-operation from outlying precincts,” but had nonetheless cobbled together enough workers to man the polls and distribute flyers.⁴²

Pomeroy, meanwhile, continued to collect petition signatures through local chairmen, although she did “not at all know whether they were doing the work.” Few remained in contact with Pomeroy, particularly those in Duval County, where Archie Parr ruled with an iron fist, and which had “gone dead” since TESA had instructed suffragists there to report to Pomeroy. In Hidalgo County, Pomeroy had entrusted the campaign to Mrs. D. W. Glasscock, whom Pomeroy held in low esteem: “she runs to social functions—not real issues.”⁴³ Her experiences in organizing the area left her pessimistic about the whole campaign:

Isn't it devilish? The women of this state are far too lacking in organization to put thru such a plan as New York presented to you. ...If we lose out this time, and have it to do over again—help us, Heaven!

...As for all this stuff about watchers, and election returns, etc., I'll transmit it, but suspect it will only add to my postage account!⁴⁴

Pomeroy's cynicism was largely misplaced; of the sixteen counties comprising the Twenty-Third Senatorial District, only four —Starr, Duval, Jim Hogg, and Jim Wells counties—opposed the 1919 referendum. In Cameron County, despite the absence of a sustained, organized suffrage movement, the suffrage amendment sailed through by a

⁴² Anna R. Kelly to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, May 22, 1919, Folder 85, Box 6, MFC, microfilm reel 3.

⁴³ Ella Pomeroy to Edith Hinkle League, Jan. 31, 1919, Folder 6, Box 9, JYM.

⁴⁴ Ella Pomeroy to “My dear People,” May 21, 1919, Folder 1, Box 9, JYM.

margin of over two hundred votes—as it did in Hidalgo County.⁴⁵ After the returns were in, the pro-suffrage Brownsville *Herald* editorialized on the shortcomings of the local effort:

To the Herald, it seems as if there was not quite enough pep put into the campaign. There should have been more speakers, more posters, more and better advertising. A few really good and telling posters distributed about every town in the state might have helped. The posters did a world of good in the liberty loan, Red Cross and other patriotic campaigns during the war. ...The Herald will lay a wager the ladies will win next time.⁴⁶

While other factors more adequately explain the victory of the suffrage referendum in Cameron County, whatever suffrage campaign did exist after 1915 occurred only through the dedication of individual suffragists like Kelly and Pomeroy.

In other rural Texas counties, the demographic composition of the population shaped local attitudes about woman and her place in southern life in the early twentieth century. In the counties of this study, those with settlement patterns established in the antebellum and immediate postwar era proved less likely to support woman suffrage than those settled primarily during or after Reconstruction. Rebecca Sharpless argues that for rural Texas women the nineteenth century “southern patriarchal ideal” that defined woman’s place in society, household, and marriage, remained a fixed quality of

⁴⁵ Texas Legislature, House, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the First and Second Called Session of the Thirty-Sixth Legislature, Begun and Held at the City of Austin, May 5, 1919, and June 23, 1919* (Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones Co, 1919), 442-45.

⁴⁶ “Suffrage Lead in County Is Growing,” *Brownsville (Tex.) Daily Herald*, May 26, 1919; “One Pro Vote Is Cast at Isabel, None for Suffrage Amendment,” *Brownsville (Tex.) Daily Herald*, May 27, 1919; “Splendid Showing for Woman Suffrage,” *Brownsville (Tex.) Daily Herald*, Jun. 1, 1919.

rural life in the early twentieth century—one that was continually reinforced by the authorities of home and church. According to Ted Ownby, the interconnected realms of home and church completely circumscribed women's lives in the rural South, and located pious domesticity centrally in southern notions of proper womanhood.⁴⁷ The persistence of antebellum attitudes toward gender in counties with dynamic settlement patterns before 1880 likely contributed to local resistance to woman suffrage during the campaign and, in some counties, slim margins of victory if the 1919 referendum did prevail.

Antebellum gender views likely informed the politics of Anderson County, where despite the tireless efforts of Kate Hunter to keep suffrage in public discourse, voters defeated the referendum in May 1919 by a vote of 1,260 to 1,116. Settlement in Anderson boomed after 1840, when Texan troops drove out native Kickapoo tribes. The county population grew from 2,884 in 1850 to 10,398 by 1860, with free families comprising sixty-five percent of settlers. Following a small decline in 1870, during which the number of black residents grew to account for almost half the county population, Anderson ballooned to over seventeen thousand inhabitants—more than half

⁴⁷ Rebecca Sharpless, *Fertile Ground, Narrow Choices: Women on Texas Cotton Farms, 1900-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 35; Ted Ownby, *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 103-143.

white—a decade later, due largely to the appearance of the International and Great Northern Railroad in 1875.⁴⁸

Agricultural concerns and evangelicalism permeated county culture; the unifying event of community life in Anderson at the turn of the twentieth century was a series of protracted revival meetings held in August between the planting and harvesting of the cotton crop.⁴⁹ The revival served as a powerful reinforcement of woman's sphere; a dinner on the meeting grounds became a feature event described by Ownby as "a huge celebration of the virtues of domestic life." The essential spiritual objective of the revival was to reform the inappropriate public behavior of rural men, who were called to the altar by ministers to repent for their sinful excesses. For all rural southerners, however, revivals "became festivals in celebration of evangelical sentiment," affirming not only public expectations that women remain the spiritual nexus of the home and family, but also that the home supplied the limits of women's authority.⁵⁰

Settlement in Lampasas County began in earnest after 1850, when white settlers were drawn to the therapeutic mineral springs in the area. The county grew slowly until 1870, after which the county population quadrupled in a decade, with white farmers comprising nearly ninety-five percent of the population—a dominance they would assert

⁴⁸ Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. "ANDERSON COUNTY," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/AA/hca1.html> (accessed April 11, 2006).

⁴⁹ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching*, revised edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 3.

⁵⁰ Ted Ownby, *Subduing Satan*, 146-164.

into the twentieth century.⁵¹ County inhabitants resisted dramatic change; Lampasas farmers, concerned about cattle rustling and falling cotton prices, founded in 1877 the Farmers' Alliance, the precursor to the Populist Party, and an eventual expression of insurgent opposition to the socioeconomic and political changes ongoing in response to industrialization in the United States. Despite the class-based structure of the Alliance, which permitted farmwomen positions of leadership and influence, the principles of the Alliance endorsed rather than challenged the limits of domesticity.⁵² Farmers in Lampasas County who remained linked to the insurgent ideology of the Alliance during the years of the suffrage campaign found their views on woman's sphere reinforced by the *Ferguson Forum*, a combination which may have contributed to the defeat of the 1919 suffrage referendum in eleven of the thirteen precincts in the county—all remote from the county seat of Lampasas.⁵³

Perhaps no county in this study demonstrated the influence of settlement patterns on woman suffrage better than Wharton, where the two primary communities of Wharton and El Campo developed as geographical and cultural opposites. Settlers in the county after 1830 tended to immigrate from the lower South, with particularly strong representation from Alabama, and created homesteads east of the Colorado River. As

⁵¹ Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. "LAMPASAS COUNTY," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/LL/hcl3.html> (accessed April 11, 2006).

⁵² Marion K. Barthelme, *Women in the Texas Populist Movement: Letters to the Southern Mercury* (College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 8-10.

⁵³ "Vote on Amendments," *Lampasas (Tex.) Leader*, May 30, 1919; "Complete Election Returns, *Lampasas (Tex.) Leader*, Jun. 13, 1919.

“ambitious and prosperous plantation owners,” the new settlers included prescriptive views on race and gender among their baggage. Those views likely shaped local participation in the Ku Klux Klan after 1917; Wharton County boasted five hundred members of the “invisible empire” at its peak.⁵⁴ By contrast, on the West side of the Colorado River, the community of El Campo boomed from a rail camp known as Prairie Switch in 1882 to a thriving, self-styled progressive community boasting 130 businesses by 1900. Lured by the prospect of cheap land marketed by the Texas Land and Cattle Company, settlers from the Midwest flocked to El Campo and western Wharton County, where they forged an ethnically heterogeneous population comprising Anglo, Danish, Swedish, German, Czech, Hispanic, Japanese, Russian, and African-American elements.⁵⁵

Women’s participation in the 1918 primary and the returns of the 1919 referendum election reflect the contrast between a homogenous, southern, Anglo population with roots in the antebellum period in the eastern half of Wharton County and the eclectic communities settled west of the Colorado after 1880. The primary returns are suggestive but inconclusive: in Wharton, 138 women cast ballots in the July

⁵⁴ Annie Lee Williams, *A History of Wharton County: 1846-1961* (Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones, Co., 1964), 10-12, 127-128, 172-245. Nancy McLean argues that, although Klansmen tended to support woman suffrage as a means of securing prohibition, they nevertheless acted out of anxiety about the changing roles of women in society either by promoting traditional notions of domesticity, or by expressing their gender frustration through racial violence in communities where blacks represented a significant minority, as they did in Wharton County (32% of total county population in 1920). See McLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 114-124.

⁵⁵ Williams, *History of Wharton County*, 246-273.

1918 election; the *El Campo Citizen* had no means by which to distinguish the woman vote, but concluded from the total number of ballots that the woman vote “must have been heavy.”⁵⁶ More telling are the returns for the 1919 referendum, in which the combined votes of suffrage supporters in El Campo and Wharton failed to shepherd the amendment to victory. Supporting votes in the two towns comprised nearly sixty percent of county support for the amendment, but the combined opposing votes amounted to only thirty-eight percent of total opposition, as the peripheral communities in the more densely-populated eastern half of the county rose up to defeat the amendment.⁵⁷

In counties where frontier life retained some influence over local culture, Texans embraced more equitable views on gender relations. The link between expansion, frontier life, and gender is the subject of a recent study by Adrienne Caughfield, who argues that while domesticity continued to inform woman’s role in “civilizing” the Western wilderness, women nevertheless found themselves engaged in new forms of work outside the traditional domestic sphere. Women still self-identified with domesticity, but “both genders had a duty to help construct civilization in the wilderness, each with a distinct set of responsibilities.” Caughfield disputes the

⁵⁶ “Election Will Make Very Few Changes,” *Wharton (Tex.) Spectator*, Aug. 2, 1918; “Old Timers Removed From County Offices,” *El Campo (Tex.) Citizen*, Aug. 2, 1918.

⁵⁷ “The Election,” *El Campo (Tex.) Citizen*, May 30, 1919; Texas Legislature, House, *Journal of the House of Representatives of the First and Second Called Sessions of the Thirty-Sixth Legislature, Begun and Held at the City of Austin, May 5, 1919, and June 23, 1919* (Austin: Von Boeckmann-Jones Co., 1919), 442-445.

Turnerian notion of “the lone individualist bending the land to his will,” arguing instead that the confrontation and conquest of frontier challenges occurred in group contexts in which women played a more dynamic role.⁵⁸ Ample evidence of a linkage between frontier life and nontraditional gender views is supplied by the fact that the first states to grant women voting rights were all part of the rolling American frontier west of the Mississippi River. Men in the Wyoming Territory granted women voting rights as early as 1869, followed by Colorado in 1893, and then Utah, California, Washington state, Oregon, Arizona, Kansas, and even the Alaska Territory by 1913.

In Texas counties where ranching reigned—typically among the last settled in the state—economic needs often required women to assume responsibilities outside their traditional sphere. Men and women worked their ranches in manner far more equitable than their counterparts on farms or in towns, and the relationship between gender and power evolved accordingly. Anne Firor Scott has recounted the manner in which economic realities engendered cultural change for nineteenth century southern women, as the Civil War altered work in the Confederacy in ways that propelled women into new economic roles. With men deployed to the battlefield, “submissiveness was no longer a functional virtue,” and women became “planters, millers, merchants, manufacturers, [and] managers.” They also attended to their domestic responsibilities, now compounded by the needs of war. Defeat and Reconstruction introduced “subtle changes . . . in the self-image of southern women,” as “the knowledge, attitudes, and

⁵⁸ Adrienne Caughfield, *True Women & Westward Expansion* (College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 2005), 3-37.

values shared by southerners, and the ideal patterns—the generally accepted view of how people *should* behave in certain situations were, bit by bit, being altered.”⁵⁹ The trend toward economic self-sufficiency among southern women continued unabated to the end of the nineteenth century, leaving in its wake embryonic social change, for “when the factories needed cheap labor,” Scott argues, “it became acceptable for women to work in mills; when businesses needed secretaries, when children needed teachers, whenever and wherever economic imperatives existed, mores and social barriers gave way.”⁶⁰

Economic imperatives fostered similar change in Donley and Presidio Counties, where ranching accounted for virtually all of the county’s economic output, and where women were required to undertake new responsibilities. In Texas, the rigors of frontier life, coupled with the demands of ranch operations, forged an environment in which “sexual equality was an accepted reality.”⁶¹ On Donley County sheep and horse ranches, women herded livestock on horseback with the men during the day, and in the evenings assumed formal dress and hosted parties more suitable to southern womanhood. The earliest immigrants to the Panhandle viewed women on more equitable terms than other

⁵⁹ Anne Firor Scott, *Making the Invisible Woman Visible* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 197-198; Scott, *The Southern Lady*, 80-102. See also Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, *New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the Southern States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 9-10.

⁶⁰ Scott, *The Southern Lady*, 106-133. The quote is found on page 129.

⁶¹ Judie Walton Gammage, “Quest for Equality: An Historical Overview of Women’s Rights Activism in Texas, 1890-1975,” (Ph.D. diss., North Texas State University, 1982), 39.

southerners, and the often-difficult living conditions of the Panhandle plains required women to take a more active role.⁶² Similar conditions prevailed in Presidio County, where, for example, the Brite Ranch was maintained as a partnership between Lucas and Eddie Brite. Luke Brite spent his time out on the land managing his herd, while Eddie, who understood the cattle business thoroughly, maintained the financial records and managed correspondence. After Lucas Brite's death in 1941, Eddie Brite assumed complete control of the management of the Brite Ranch.⁶³

That Donley and Presidio county residents exhibited more equitable views on women is also evidenced by the fact that, of the nine counties in this study, only those counties demonstrated in any kind of sustained organizational suffrage activism. They did not form suffrage associations; they acted instead through the most prominent secular women's organizations in the community. In January 1919, Presidio County Chairman Frances Fennell notified Cunningham that she had not pursued any organizational work because "our women did not consider such a movement feasible in a small town." The Marfa History Club, however, "the strongest, most progressive organization in the county," published a resolution in the Marfa *New Era* asking county voters to support the May 24 referendum.⁶⁴ Likewise, the members of the Clarendon

⁶² Jeanice Weatherly, interview by author, Clarendon, Tex., Aug. 18, 2004.

⁶³ Noel L. Keith, *The Brites of Capote* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1950), 76; Kate Adele Hill, *Home Builders of West Texas*, reprint edition (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1970), 63-65; Jane Brite White, interview by author, Marfa, Tex., Aug. 22, 2004.

⁶⁴ Mrs. H. M. Fennell to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Mar. 28, 1919, Folder 110, Box 8, MFC, microfilm reel 3.

Pathfinder Club organized the Hobby School of Citizenship for the 1918 primary, and in 1919 the Pathfinder women resolved to “organize the women of Clarendon in the interest of women’s suffrage.”⁶⁵ Unlike other clubwomen in rural Texas communities, who recoiled from suffrage work—even when they agreed with it in principle—out of fear that their community standing would be threatened, women in Donley and Presidio counties pursued suffrage work confidently through their existing organizations because they detected no such threat.

In Cameron County, woman suffrage became a means for Anglos newly arrived in the Valley to challenge the James B. Wells Democratic machine and express racial hostility towards the Hispanic voting bloc that empowered him. Capitalizing on existing *patrón-peón* relations between landowner and laborer that informed border culture and predated Texas independence, Wells emerged from private legal practice in 1882 to consolidate the Cameron County Blue Club, an established Democratic political machine through which party leaders crafted compromise tickets and mobilized hundreds of voting members uniformly to support designated candidates. Through relationships nurtured with local ranching elites, Mexican and Mexican-American labor, and the Brownsville merchant class, Wells very quickly assumed control of municipal, county, and regional politics. Commanding a patronage system in which an economically and politically favorable climate was exchanged by economic and political authorities for

⁶⁵ Pathfinder Club of Clarendon, *Pathfinder Pilgrims*, I, Pt. 4, “Minutes of 1916-1919” (Clarendon, TX: Pathfinder Club of Clarendon, 2003), 27; “Hobby School of Citizenship,” Clarendon (Tex.) *News*, May 30, 1918; Pathfinder Club of Clarendon, *Pathfinder Pilgrims*, I, Pt. 5, “Minutes, 1919,” 7-8.

jobs and other needs of the working-class Hispanics casting ballots, Wells by 1885 became the kingmaker of South Texas.⁶⁶

After 1904, the demographics of Cameron County would undergo dramatic change, as Protestant Anglo speculators from the Midwest hurried to South Texas to exploit the new and ostensibly lucrative agricultural opportunities created by the completion of the St. Louis, Brownsville, and Mexico Railway connecting Corpus Christi to Brownsville. Developers snatched up massive tracts of ranchland from landowners eager to profit from meteoric values; the property was subdivided and sold in ten-to-forty-acre tracts to uninitiated settlers convinced that profit awaited those willing simply to plant their crops, sit back, and reap the rewards.⁶⁷

Before long, the new arrivals began to disrupt the racial harmony longstanding in Cameron County. Whereas older Anglo generations had assimilated with the Hispanic population through commerce and intermarriage, the new settlers rejected Mexican culture and belief, choosing instead to confront and replace it with their own white, Protestant variant. Evan Anders identifies “distrust of Catholicism, the popular stereotype of the indolent, subservient Mexican *peon*, the corruption of the Hispanic vote, the periodic outbreaks of banditry along the border, and the Mexican American opposition to prohibition” as the foundation of Anglo prejudice against Valley

⁶⁶ Evan Anders, *Boss Rule in South Texas: The Progressive Era* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), xii-xiv, 5-25.

⁶⁷ Anders, *Boss Rule in South Texas*, 139-140.

Hispanics.⁶⁸ John M. Duncan of San Antonio offered a cruder but equally representative view to Annette Finnigan, deriding the “Mexican greasers” in the Valley as a “low, dirty ignorant element” unable to speak English and willing to prostitute their votes to James Wells.⁶⁹ After 1911, Anglo resentment and suspicion toward Hispanics became increasingly pronounced, as Anglos recoiled from the sudden influx into Texas of Mexicans fleeing revolutionary violence, and were terrorized by the murderous predations of Pancho Villa along the border.⁷⁰

The growing racial division of Cameron County catalyzed the emergence of sustained Anglo opposition to the Wells machine after 1906, particularly in the newly incorporated, Anglo-dominated municipalities of San Benito and Harlingen. Throughout the Valley, Anglos united in a racially-charged political insurgency aimed at destabilizing boss politics in Hidalgo, Starr, Duval, and Cameron Counties. In Brownsville, the heart of Wells’ power, Anglos formed an Independent Party in 1908 to counter Wells’ Blue Club. Although the Independents often resorted to similar manipulative tactics, namely repeated attempts to mobilize Hispanic voters as an Independent bloc, their rhetoric and candidate selection were designed specifically to appeal to Anglo voters from the Midwest and other parts of the United States. Anglos viewed the insurgent Independents warily at first, but by 1910 Independent candidates

⁶⁸ Anders, *Boss Rule in South Texas*, 149-153. The quote is found on page 66.

⁶⁹ John M. Duncan to Annette Finnigan, Mar. 6, 1915, Folder 5, Box 6, JYM.

⁷⁰ Anders, *Boss Rule in South Texas*, 215-239.

began making inroads against Wells in municipal contests, and margins of victory in elections throughout the region narrowed with the influence of Anglo votes.⁷¹

The emergence of woman suffrage as a state concern after 1914 offered Anglo insurgents a new and powerful tool with which to attack the Wells machine.

Registration tallies in 1918 show strong political activity among women in the Anglo-dominated communities of Cameron County. Of the almost six hundred women registered by July 6, only seventy lived in Brownsville; Anglo-dominated San Benito led the way, followed closely by Harlingen, another predominantly Anglo community.

Brownsville women closed the gap by July 12, but Anglo voters in San Benito maintained a lead over the county seat. Observing the totals, the *Herald* concluded that soon “the balance of political power in Cameron county will no longer rest in Brownsville.”⁷² This was no coincidence; through their growing numbers and the woman vote, Anglos hoped not only to shift power away from Jim Wells and Brownsville, but also to break the influence of his patronage system, and thus liberate Valley politics from the Mexican vote.

Local suffrage advocates recognized the challenge posed by confronting Wells. Eager to stave off potential election fraud, Cameron County suffragists studied every detail of the voting process. In June 1918, San Benito ESA Secretary Mrs. Perry Welty

⁷¹ Anders, *Boss Rule in South Texas*, 148-162.

⁷² “Registration of Women for Elections Slow,” *Brownsville (Tex.) Herald*, Jul. 2, 1918; “1000 Women Cameron Co. Register for July Election,” *Brownsville (Tex.) Herald*, Jul. 13, 1918; “County Women Want Vote,” *Brownsville (Tex.) Herald*, Jul. 6, 1918.

asked Cunningham to explain “the meaning of the legislature in the passage of the bill authorizing women to vote in primary elections and conventions.” Confusing the women was Texas Attorney General Ben Looney’s March 29 ruling that women living in rural precincts surrounding cities of ten thousand or more inhabitants did not have to register before voting. A local attorney had already disagreed with Looney’s opinion, and Welty needed absolute clarity on voting requirements. She cited the antisuffrage argument that “a majority of women in Texas did not want the right to vote, and...such a constitutional amendment should not be submitted until it appeared from a referendum vote that a majority of Texas women had signified that they wished the voting franchise.” Welty wanted Cameron County to have a good showing, and deny Pauline Wells and other antis ammunition. Cunningham hurriedly advised Welty to “be safe...[rather] than depend on the election officers accepting Attorney General Looney’s ruling. ...insist that the women of your organization, town and county register and vote.”⁷³

Returns in 1918 and 1919 also suggest an attempt to thwart boss rule through the Anglo vote. One particularly instructive return from the 1918 primary was the resounding defeat of Duval County political boss Archie Parr, a candidate for the District 23 Senate seat, by challenger D. W. Glasscock by nearly five hundred votes. Wells anticipated that the woman vote would threaten Parr. “No one on earth can either tell how they are going to vote,” he warned Parr during the campaign, “or control them.”

⁷³ Mrs. Perry A. Welty to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Jun. 1, 1918, Folder 85, Box 6, MFC, microfilm reel 3; Minnie Fisher Cunningham to Mrs. Perry A. Welty, Jun. 5, 1918, Folder 85, Box 6, MFC, microfilm reel 3.

Desperate to reverse the result, Parr first hobbled the democratic process by refusing to release the Duval County returns. Wells and Parr together then filled the positions of authority in the county convention with their allies, who then accepted audaciously fraudulent returns from Duval. A counteroffensive by the Glasscock campaign drove the controversy into court, where Parr employed a final gambit of securing a sympathetic judge to hear the case. A hearing in the Texas Senate ultimately cost Glasscock and Valley Anglos the contest, as Parr was seated in that chamber by a floor vote of sixteen to fourteen.⁷⁴

Returns of the May 1919 referendum demonstrate not only the growing political authority of insurgent Anglos, but also the declining state of Jim Wells' machinery, which was collapsing by 1919. Twelve of the sixteen counties in Ella Pomeroy's Senatorial District approved the suffrage referendum, and decisive majorities for the amendment were returned by nearly all of the twenty ballot precincts in Cameron County. The Point Isabel precinct became a curiosity, as voters there cast fifty votes against prohibition and fifty votes against suffrage, with only one supporting vote for prohibition and none for suffrage. This surprised the suffragists, who knew the precinct to be "wholly under Wells influence," but had still managed before the election to secure thirty-five signatures on prosuffrage petitions from among the nearly three hundred residents there. Prohibition also succeeded in Cameron County, sending Wells, who

⁷⁴ Anders, *Boss Rule in South Texas*, 255-266.

“fiercely resisted the progressive tide” on both election reform and prohibition, reeling and unable to recover.⁷⁵

Although local factors ultimately exercised decisive influence in the fortunes of woman suffrage in rural Texas, they rarely functioned in isolation. Instead, they often worked in tandem. In Anderson County, for example, echoes of Fergusonism in the *Ferguson Forum* likely inflamed antebellum gender prejudice against the suffragists’ vision for modern womanhood. In a county with African-Americans comprising fully one-third of the total population, antisuffrage claims that woman suffrage would also enfranchise blacks may also have contributed to suffrage opposition. Ferguson’s lingering influence proved equally problematic in Lampasas County, where Lampasas ESA President Lee Lytton Smith specifically identified the *Forum* in 1919 as a leading antisuffrage agent in the county. Most obviously, the intersection of local circumstances played a critical role in Cameron County, where demographic shifts after 1900 sparked dramatic racial hostility that found expression in local politics.

Women in rural Texas generally failed to make the transition from evangelical or secular organizational culture to organized suffrage work because the cultural precepts of their communities—precepts to which most of them fully subscribed—prohibited it. Regardless of socioeconomic status, southern women who linked themselves publicly with the equal suffrage campaign were immediately branded as radicals or, even more

⁷⁵ “Suffrage Lead in County is Growing,” *Brownsville (Tex.) Herald*, May 26, 1919; “One Pro Vote is Cast at Isabel, None for Suffrage Amendment,” *Brownsville (Tex.) Herald*, May 27, 1919; Anna R. Kelly to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, May 22, 1919, Folder 85, Box 6, MFC, microfilm reel 3; Anders, *Boss Rule in South Texas*, 89-90, 273-275.

damaging, feminists, which invoked automatic connotations of free love and socialism.⁷⁶

Women who assumed leadership roles in the suffrage movement in rural communities chose to risk their standing within their towns and among their peers for, in their view, the greater reward of political reform. The conservatism inherent in rural communities, the hostility of suffrage opponents, and the provocative nature of antisuffrage rhetoric convinced most rural women, however, that the cost was too great; inaction, and the preservation of status and social capital that accompanied it, offered benefits more material and immediate than ethereal promises of political power and democracy realized.

⁷⁶ Scott, *The Southern Lady*, 183, n. 33.

CHAPTER VII
IN WORD AND DEED:
FEMINIST THOUGHT AND ACTION IN THE RURAL SUFFRAGE
MOVEMENT

The campaign for woman suffrage in rural Texas generally failed to persuade both local inhabitants and representatives to the state legislature to support suffrage reform. Although rural women individually exhausted their energy, resources, and relationships to pursue the ballot, rural Texans remained unreceptive and at times hostile to their goals. When rural Texans did embrace woman suffrage, they did so only as a means to fulfill other needs; few suffrage sympathizers subscribed to the notion that woman suffrage was the proper expression of natural liberty or that women deserved political equality with men. Despite those failures, however, the suffrage campaign over time successfully created for women in rural Texas unprecedented opportunities to challenge the patriarchy that circumscribed their daily lives.

The opportunities were twofold. First, the suffrage campaign created space for rural Texas women to articulate feminist ideas through both their rhetoric and their behavior. None of the suffragists in the counties treated here, TESA-affiliated or otherwise, self-identified as feminists in the historical record, but feminist subtexts nevertheless appeared in their correspondence, in newspaper columns, and in the choices they made as leaders of the rural suffrage movement. While rarely resorting to overtly feminist language or argumentation in their activism, rural suffragists in Texas recognized women as an independent interest group, and consciously pursued the

improvement of the status of woman. This was a regional and national tendency; Anne Firor Scott concludes “beyond any doubt that southern women wanted the vote primarily because of their concern about the place of women in the world.”¹ For rural suffragists in Texas, particularly those who occupied increasingly visible positions of leadership, concern for the advancement of women as women remained fixed among their motivations for suffrage work.

Second, the suffrage campaign encouraged rural Texas women to test the limits of domesticity by entering the political arena after 1917. Against a constant drumbeat of apocalyptic antisuffrage propaganda, women registered for the July 1918 primary election in unexpected numbers, surprising observers and suffragists alike with their sudden enthusiasm. They approached their newfound power with a grave sense of responsibility, educating themselves on candidates and issues in so thorough a manner that observers thought women more serious about their political obligations than men. They also comprised a significant percentage of the 1918 electorate; 386,000 Texas women registered for the primary, and while fewer women than the suffragists anticipated actually cast ballots, the woman vote “transformed a close contest into a rout.”² Women across rural Texas also entered politics as candidates for office, doubtless confounding locals not only with their candidacy, but also with repeated victories by significant margins.

¹ Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady*,” 183, n. 33.

² Lewis L. Gould, *Progressives and Prohibitionists: Texas Democrats in the Wilson Era* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973), 245.

As I mentioned in the first chapter, my definition of feminism applies criteria used by Nancy Cott: a belief in sex equality or, more precisely, opposition to sex hierarchy; the assumption that women's condition is socially constructed rather than prescribed by God or nature; and, that "women perceive themselves not only as a biological sex but . . . as a social grouping." Not only do these ideas appear in suffragist action and discourse, but so, too, do paradoxes in feminist thought Cott identifies in the early twentieth century. Feminism in the 1910s and 1920s "asks for sexual equality that includes sexual difference, ...aims for individual freedoms by mobilizing sex solidarity, ...posits that women recognize their unity while it stands for diversity among women, ...[and] requires gender consciousness for its basis yet calls for the elimination of prescribed gender roles."³

The suffrage campaign offered a public discursive space in which rural suffragists articulated feminist ideas. Often these expressions appeared in the columns of the local papers. As the 1918 primary election approached in Lamar County, Maude Neville, the society columnist for the Paris *Morning News* and wife to editor A. W. Neville, applauded the work of local women to inform themselves on the issues and the candidates before proclaiming,

Forget this silly propaganda about 'foolish femininity' — the proportion of common sense is about equal between man and woman, and, if woman is ignorant about the laws and methods of her government, it is through no fault of her own. Compare the mentality, the education and the ambition

³ Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1987), 4-5.

of a young man and young woman of twenty-one; is there any doubt as to where the superiority lies?⁴

Neville's remarks departed radically from traditional claims to the moral superiority of women, arguing instead for the intellectual equality of women and holding men specifically accountable for denying women political access.

Similar claims appeared in the more remote *Clarendon News*, where local music instructor Rosa Adelaide Marquis, while celebrating primary suffrage in 1918, audaciously challenged the limits of domesticity. "The time is past," she wrote, "when women must remain in the kitchen or idle away their time in the world depends [*sic*] solely upon men." Women were capable of informed political choices, and would vote "according to their CONSCIENCE regarding WHICH CANDIDATE WILL FILL THE OFFICE BEST [*emphasis original*]." Marquis rejected *News* editor Sam Braswell's frequent gender attacks upon suffrage advocates:

It is not necessary for [women] to be any the less womanly, cultured or refined than the woman who chooses to remain within the domain of her home, because her husband feels it unnecessary for her to know anything of business, or politics, feeling that as long as he provides shelter, and food, her happiness should be completed and her narrow realm concerning any knowledge of the outer world, should satisfy her ambition. Women do not ask favors, but DECLARE THEIR RIGHTS [*emphasis original*].⁵

Suffragists in rural Texas betrayed feminist sensibilities in ways other than suffrage work. In Wharton County, Corinne Fullerton served both as a teacher and administrator in the Wharton public school for five years. In May 1918, she was

⁴ "Society and Club Notes," *Paris (Tex.) Morning News*, Jun. 16, 1918.

⁵ "How Women Will Vote," *Clarendon (Tex.) News*, Jul. 18, 1918.

dismissed suddenly from her post by Superintendent J. M. Hodges. Not content to suffer silently, an enraged Fullerton took out a three-column advertisement in the June 7 edition of the Wharton *Spectator* defending herself. Fullerton claimed that she had always “stood for all that was good for the school, [had] upheld individual rights, ...maintained a close, friendly and impartial relationship with the pupils,” and a “courteous and friendly” attitude towards her colleagues. Hodges had dismissed her on grounds of “**lack of cooperation, disloyalty to him,**” and “**incompatibility** [emphasis original].” Fullerton challenged Hodges to present his accusations to the school board, but, she claimed, he refused to do so, and failed to appear for a scheduled hearing on May 29. Fullerton called the charges baseless, and then accused Hodges of academic improprieties of his own, including altering permanent student records and promoting students through favoritism. Hodges convinced the school board to investigate Fullerton with witnesses he selected, to which Fullerton replied, “Is this **justice**? Are these the **principles** that make the **world safe for democracy** [emphasis original]?” As to incompatibility, Fullerton fumed,

...do you wonder that there should be **incompatibility** between a fearless, impartial, upright woman and...a man who has **falsified grades**, issued **blank** [promotion] certificates, **drilled** pupils for **examination**, and **displayed partiality**. It is for the good of the school to have a man of this character with absolute power at its head [emphasis original]?⁶

Whether Fullerton’s dismissal occurred in response to her role as leader of the local suffrage movement is unclear, but her impassioned defense demonstrates not only a willingness to challenge publicly male authority, but also her view of the rights entitled

⁶ “An Appeal to the Public,” *Wharton (Tex.) Spectator*, Jun. 7, 1918.

to women.

Through the network created by the suffrage movement at the local, regional, and state levels, suffragists ruptured the boundaries of domesticity and laid a discursive claim to public space. The suffrage campaign supplied opportunities for women who otherwise may never have met to correspond regularly about the progress of the movement, their needs as suffrage leaders, and the ideas that informed their actions. In their letters, women geographically remote from one another discussed local and state political concerns and strategies. Kate Hunter and Minnie Fisher Cunningham, for example, occasionally discussed the Ferguson/Bailey opposition and theorized about ways to defeat it. In the Valley, Ella Pomeroy and Frances Heywood often commented on life under Wells' political machine. These were topics considered inappropriate for and forbidden from women by the prevailing patriarchy, but the correspondence between suffragists supplied a secure and empathetic environment in which to openly discuss them.

This represents an important departure from traditional patterns of socialization demonstrated by American women, who lived in a state of "emotional segregation" from men, and who crafted over the nineteenth century a social network borne of mother-daughter intimacy and evolving later to comprise kin and peers. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg defines the functions of these "homosocial" relationships to include empathetic discussions of "troubles that apparently no man could understand." This network, which scorned criticism of other women and facilitated the growth of women's "inner security and self-esteem," offered status and power to and among women denied

access to “the larger world of male concerns.”⁷ Yet this power, however legitimate, remained circumscribed by domesticity. Through their discussions of state and local politics that appeared in correspondence, conversely, Texas suffragists briefly escaped true womanhood and claimed at least a discursive dimension of the public and the political for their growing social network.

Discourse offered rural suffragists but one means by which to challenge domesticity. The campaign also supplied rural women space in which they could act on feminist beliefs to promote political equality for women. Any public link to suffrage advocacy meant for women immediate branding as radicals; undeterred by this, however, rural women in Texas embraced the suffrage campaign and pursued reform in both unconventional and highly visible ways.⁸ Corinne Fullerton perhaps expressed suffragists’ sentiments best when, in response to a request from Minnie Fisher Cunningham for a photo identifying Fullerton as the President of the Wharton Woman Suffrage Association, she replied that there was “no cause in which I’d as soon be seen [emphasis original].”⁹ Kate Hunter intuitively saw merit in the cause:

I had never heard of it and Mrs. Cunningham came and wanted to know if I were [*sic*] for it. I sed [*sic*] certainly. And right then and there, though I had never given it any thought, I put my shoulder to the whell [*sic*] and

⁷ Carol Smith-Rosenberg, “The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Signs* 1, No. 1 (Autumn, 1975): 9-15.

⁸ Scott, *The Southern Lady*, 183, n. 33.

⁹ Corinne Fullerton to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Apr. 16, 1916, Folder 2, Box 55, Jane Yelvington McCallum Papers (Austin History Center, Austin Public Library, Austin, Texas; hereinafter JYM).

went to work. I was for it and so I just swam in and stayed with it until it came.¹⁰

In the correspondence between rural suffragists and TESA leaders, evidence of estrangement between the New Women and clubwomen of rural Texas communities reveals among suffrage leaders motivations other than the extension of the domestic sphere. Clubwomen in rural Texas who clung to traditional womanhood became more of an obstacle than an asset to the more militant leadership. While trying to sustain the movement in Palestine in 1916, Hunter assailed “those civic leaguers who are a stumbling block in Palestine.”¹¹ Reflecting on the suffrage campaign after 1920, Hunter recalled with some disdain Anna Pennybacker, then the President of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, who “always was on [the] popular side” of the question and “didn’t come out for suffrage” until she realized that it was inevitable, and then she endorsed it.¹² Complaints about apathy among local clubwomen was a common refrain. Ella Pomeroy expressed similar thoughts in Cameron County, where she found the Rio Grande Federation of Woman’s Clubs “not sufficiently interesting to make one WANT the job of president.” Edith Hinkle League agreed, suggesting that the suffragists upend the organization once suffrage was achieved “and make the whole machinery move at a

¹⁰ Kate Hunter, untitled manuscript, n. d., Folder 6, Box 3, JYM, 12.

¹¹ Kate Hunter to Minnie Fisher Cunningham, Jun. 19, 1916, Folder 3, Box 47, JYM.

¹² Kate Hunter, untitled manuscript, n. d., Folder 6, Box 3, JYM, Part I, 13.

less majestic pace.”¹³ Dislodging rural clubwomen became a constant battle; Frances Heywood remarked from San Benito, “it’s hard to shake the women of the small towns lose [*sic*] from their usual ‘Browning or Shakespeare’ clubs [and] get them into the things that really would enable us to get the vote,” and the constant attempts to do so frustrated impatient suffrage leaders.¹⁴

Risk became a litmus test for feminism among rural suffragists. Women who were invested heavily in true southern womanhood through marriage, home, and children—features common to most Texas clubwomen—remained less likely to participate in the activism of the suffrage campaign beyond the most perfunctory acts, fearful that public exposure as suffragists would exact a high price in social capital, and thus expel them from the ranks of true womanhood. Suffrage leaders constantly found women willing to participate in discussions and meetings behind closed doors, but who blanched at the notion of publicly engaging in suffrage advocacy. Women publicly linked to the equal suffrage campaign fell victim to the venomous antisuffrage propaganda permeating the state press; labeled radical, feminist, lesbian, socialist, manly, or worse, rural women who assumed public roles through suffrage work invited social repercussions potentially devastating to southern women. For the overwhelming

¹³ Ella Pomeroy to “My dear People,” Apr. 9, 1919, Folder 6, Box 9, JYM; Edith Hinkle League to Ella Pomeroy, Apr. 11, 1919, Folder 6, Box 9, JYM.

¹⁴ Frances Heywood to Edith Hinkle League, Mar. 30, 1917, Folder 49, Box 4, Minnie Fisher Cunningham Papers (Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library, Houston, Texas; hereinafter MFC), microfilm reel 2.

majority of rural women, the reward was simply not worth the risk; rural Texas women rejected suffrage activism because they feared the consequences.

Despite her many achievements as a citizen of Palestine both before and during the suffrage campaign, Kate Hunter suffered these consequences. Though “a lady of the first standing in my community,” Hunter was rejected by her peers for her work:

Some of the people who had known me all my life would turn their heads when they saw me coming and wouldn't speak to me, and nobody had any better standing. ...The men and some of the women, however, wouldn't speak. Some of the best ladies in town thought that I had disgraced myself. ...They didn't know [suffrage] was their salvation. Didn't have any idea in the world of the consequences of the movement.¹⁵

Hunter was not prepared for the public reaction to the cause. “Some of the best ladies in town thought that I had disgraced myself,” she later recalled. “Everybody approves of it now, but you can have no idea in the world what opposition there was. ...We now wouldn't have any idea in the world of the horror most people had in the beginning of suffrage. Can't imagine it. Can't imagine a person like me who had never had a slight in my life to find two women who wouldn't walk around the corner with me.”¹⁶ As a suffrage leader, Hunter pursued improvement in the interests of womanhood, and acted out of feminist conviction that political equality for women was morally correct. Like other clubwomen in Anderson County, Hunter had everything to lose by publicly campaigning for equal suffrage. Unlike her sister clubwomen, however, Hunter voluntarily sacrificed that to achieve something she obviously prized more, and

¹⁵ Kate Hunter, untitled manuscript, Folder 6, Box 3, JYM, 2, 4-6.

¹⁶ Kate Hunter, untitled manuscript, n. d., Folder 6, Box 3, JYM, 2-6.

continued her work despite the rejection of her peers through their public scorn and inaction. Hunter's choices during a visit to Palestine by NAWSA leader Anna Howard Shaw also support this conclusion. After addressing whites in the Christian Church, Shaw then spoke to local African-Americans in the City Hall. "The other suffragists in town wouldn't go to hear her speak with the negroes," Hunter remembered, "but I said it couldn't hurt me at all. ...They just clapped their heads off and she told them that whatever they were doing they should do it well."¹⁷

An examination of the leadership hierarchy of the Texas suffrage movement suggests that, at every level, the women who assumed public leadership roles generally shared a willingness to risk their standing to pursue reform. As women of prominence in a rigidly patriarchal society, they easily recognized the risks assumed by agitating for such a controversial cause. Their motivations for doing so, then, had less to do with the belief that the significance of the vote laid in the projection of private authority into public space, and more to do with a belief of women's rights as an expression of feminist consciousness. The higher and more broadly-based the position, the more visible the individual, the greater the risk, and therefore the potentially stronger the feminist conviction.

Kate Hunter, whose prolific correspondence offers unique insights into the rural suffrage campaign, took on easily the most visible leadership role in the suffrage campaign of any women from a rural community in Texas. In July 1915, Hunter volunteered to use her summer vacation time to campaign for suffrage around north and

¹⁷ Kate Hunter, untitled manuscript, n. d., Folder 6, Box 3, JYM, 6.

central Texas, thereby becoming the first woman to undertake a regular speaking tour in the state. It was a bold move; Hunter had “no training for speaking publicly,” and had never delivered a public speech. She had thus far only addressed clubwomen; this was the first time she “really had a platform.” With her mother’s blessing, Hunter traveled the state to campaign for the ballot. Her experiences typified the rural response to woman suffrage. With few women willing to host a suffrage speaker in their homes, Hunter often delivered her arguments in nearly empty venues or parks where any interested passersby did not approach her “because they didn’t want to be seen at a suffrage meeting and wanted to pretend they were just in the park.”¹⁸

Fear and ignorance thwarted Hunter’s repeated attempts to build interest in the movement. In town after town, Hunter struggled to organize “because the women were afraid to take hold of [suffrage].” In one North Texas community, Hunter’s contact, a “prominent society woman,” failed to secure a venue for her speech. As the disappointed Hunter prepared to board a train to her next destination, her local contact appeared, amazed to find that Hunter was a refined woman. She had concluded that Hunter and every other suffragist was a “Carry Nation type,” and had consequently done nothing to accommodate her. “Why,” the woman exclaimed, “if I had known you were like this I would have gotten up a meeting.” Hunter did enjoy some success in organizing some of the larger towns, but the small towns and rural communities uniformly rejected her appeals. Her tour, however, so impressed the members of the

¹⁸ Kate Hunter, untitled manuscript, n. d., Folder 6, Box 3, JYM, 1-5; “Field Work,” n. d., Mary Kate Hunter Papers (Special Collections, Palestine Public Library, Palestine, Texas; hereinafter MKH), microfilm reel 5.

TESA, that at their 1915 convention in Galveston, they offered Hunter the presidency of the organization before awarding it to Minnie Fisher Cunningham; Hunter agreed to serve as First Vice-President.¹⁹ These were roles unmistakably visible not only to Anderson County, but to the state of Texas. Had Hunter been unwilling to risk the trappings of refinement and domesticity that dictated the response of most of her peers to the suffrage movement, the idea of a lecture tour to promote it, much less an executive position in TESA, would have been outrageous.

The linkage between risk and status is supported by another feature common to many of the leaders of the rural suffrage movement. Those who assumed the most visible leadership roles in rural communities did not inhabit the traditional woman's sphere; each in some way was divorced from "true womanhood." Corinne Fullerton of Wharton County was unmarried while President of the Wharton WSA. Kate Hunter was unmarried, childless, self-employed as a music teacher, and economically independent when she assumed leadership of the movement in Palestine. In South Texas, Ella Pomeroy was married to Eltweed Pomeroy, a Fabian Socialist and former owner of Pomeroy Brothers ink and mucilage company in New Jersey, where he practiced profit-sharing with his employees. Suffragist Lillian Bailey of Presidio County was an independent business owner, as was El Campo suffrage leader Hettie Hefner, who owned a retail furniture store. This detachment allowed rural suffrage leaders to construct their identities in ways that excluded motherhood, marriage, piety, or other features of southern domesticity, which freed them to contemplate changes by which

¹⁹ Kate Hunter, untitled manuscript, n. d., Folder 6, Box 3, JYM, 1-5.

more traditional southern women felt threatened. Hunter inadvertently discovered this on her lecture tour. At virtually every stop, Hunter encountered “women who knew life from the seedy side” at the hotels in which she stayed. These women—without standing, and therefore unconcerned with their public image—uniformly supported equal suffrage.²⁰

Whether convinced by the activism of local suffragists or by other factors, the suffrage campaign emboldened rural Texas women to test the limits of southern domesticity. Across the state, women flocked to register for the 1918 primary election. Although they were driven more by a desire to thwart Jim Ferguson’s gubernatorial candidacy than by overt acceptance of political power, the number of women who registered—so great as to surprise many local observers—nevertheless rejected antisuffragist arguments to do so.²¹ This was a profound, if implicit, statement that woman’s place in Texas was entering a state of flux. If rural women accepted the bizarre logic of antisuffrage rhetoric before March 1918, they would have no reason to abandon it afterwards—no matter how grave the Ferguson threat to good government. According to antisuffragists, the consequences of women voting would lead to nothing less than the complete collapse of civilization, which surely trumped any concerns over the return of a corrupt governor. By registering in force for the 1918 primaries, rural

²⁰ Kate Hunter, untitled manuscript, n. d., Folder 6, Box 3, JYM, 2.

²¹ “Over Eight Hundred Women Registered,” *Palestine (Tex.) Daily Herald*, Jul. 6, 1918; “823 Women Register for Voting in Donley County,” *Clarendon (Tex.) News*, Jul. 18, 1918; “Total Registration of Women Voters,” *Paris (Tex.) Morning News*, Jul. 18, 1918.

Texas women signaled a willingness to at least investigate the implications of political empowerment through the vote.

If registration symbolized rejection of antisuffrage ideas, the sober and deliberate manner in which rural women prepared themselves to vote in the primaries hinted at awareness that the woman ballot was at once powerful and meaningful. In the counties of this study, suffragists hosted political study groups and mock elections through which the women of their communities and counties could secure reliable information on candidates and their positions. They invited speakers, including many candidates, to declare their positions or assist in identifying candidates sympathetic to the women's interests. In Cameron County, members of the San Benito W. C. T. U. met on July 15 at Mrs. Samuel Spears' home to discuss "Who is Who Among the Candidates."²² In Wilbarger County, Tax Collector Riley V. Parr gave an instructional session on how to mark ballots properly, and the women prepared and distributed a list of "safe" candidates.²³ In Wharton County, the El Campo Hobby Club printed sample ballots and distributed them in the Hefner-Douglas Furniture Store, while Fannie May Hughs led a meeting—with two interested men in attendance—in which the women placed a copy of the state primary ticket on a blackboard and drew lines through the names of every candidate "known to be unfavorable to either prohibition, woman's suffrage or

²² "San Benito," *Brownsville (Tex.) Herald*, Jul. 15, 1918.

²³ "Instructs Women How to Cast Vote," *Vernon (Tex.) Record*, Jul. 16, 1918; "Hobby Club Called to Meet Saturday," *Vernon (Tex.) Record*, Jul. 19, 1918; "Women Consider Safe Candidates," *Vernon (Tex.) Record*, Jul. 23, 1918.

Hobby.”²⁴ In Lampasas, Lamar, and Donley counties, suffragists organized well-attended meetings or citizenship schools to ensure that women took their responsibilities seriously.²⁵ Even in distant Presidio County, Lillian Bailey solicited information from headquarters on TESA-preferred candidates to transmit to her sister suffragists in Marfa.²⁶

Rural Texas women descended upon the ballot boxes in the 1918 primary with equal gravitas. Observers noted in Brazos County that “the ladies crowded about the polling places in far greater numbers than the men,” taking the matter “with deep seriousness.”²⁷ In Donley County, Sam Braswell was forced to concede that “women voted very intelligently in the election here,” while women in Lamar County had not only contributed to the largest primary returns in county history, but also “voted early and intelligently, walking up to the polls, making their tickets and going about their

²⁴ “The Hobby Club,” *El Campo (Tex.) Citizen*, Jul. 12, 1918; “Women Held Meeting,” *Wharton (Tex.) Spectator*, Jul. 12, 1918.

²⁵ “Equal Suffrage Association Meeting,” *Lampasas (Tex.) Leader*, Jul. 12, 1918; “Instruction School for Women Voters,” *Paris (Tex.) Morning News*, 13 July 1918; “School of Instruction Was Largely Attended,” *Paris (Tex.) Morning News*, 16 July 1918; Pathfinder Club of Clarendon, *Pathfinder Pilgrims*, Vol. I, “1911-1940,” Pt. 4, “Minutes of 1916-1919” (Clarendon, Tex., 2003), 27; “Hobby School of Citizenship,” *Clarendon (Tex.) News*, May 30, 1918; “Come and Vote,” *Clarendon (Tex.) News*, Jun. 20, 1918.

²⁶ Mrs. Charles Bailey to “Minnie Cunningham Fisher,” Jun. 21, 1918, Folder 110, Box 8, MFC, microfilm reel 3.

²⁷ “Women Are Active in the Voting in the City Precincts,” *Bryan (Tex.) Daily Eagle*, Jul. 27, 1918; “Votes of Women in the Primaries Surprisingly Heavy,” *Bryan (Tex.) Daily Eagle*, Aug. 3, 1918; “Good Government Wins in Texas,” *Bryan (Tex.) Daily Eagle*, Jul. 29, 1918.

business afterwards as if they had voted all their lives.”²⁸ In Wilbarger County, nearly half of the almost three thousand primary ballots were cast by women, whom election officials agreed knew more about the candidates, voted confidently, and marked their ballots more carefully than their husbands and brothers. “If you saw a ballot half way mutilated,” complained one judge, “you could be sure it was a man’s every time.”²⁹ The sun did rise the following morning, whereupon the *Vernon Record* couldn’t help but notice that after women cast their votes, “no husband has voiced complaint that his wife is any less lady-like, or more unwilling to cook his meals, sew on his buttons, or lay out his clothes than she was before.”³⁰

Some rural Texas women boldly tested domesticity by running for elected office, and then shocked their communities by winning the 1918 primary election. In Donley County, Mrs. Willie Goldston of Clarendon filed her candidacy for the office of County Treasurer. In Lampasas, Annie Browning ran for the office of District Clerk, as did Lula Sadler in Anderson County. Browning was a daring woman who kowtowed to no one; she evidently contemplated marriage until, at dinner, her suitor reached over with his fork and stabbed something off her plate.³¹ So robust was Sadler’s candidacy that her opponents generated rumors that she was for Ferguson, an accusation she quickly

²⁸ Editorial, *Clarendon (Tex.) News*, Aug. 1, 1918; “Later Figures on County Election,” *Paris (Tex.) Morning News*, Jul. 30, 1918; “Lamar for Hobby More Than 4 to 1,” *Paris (Tex.) Morning News*, Jul. 31, 1918.

²⁹ “Wilbarger Women Knew How to Vote,” *Vernon (Tex.) Record*, Aug. 2, 1918.

³⁰ Editorial, *Vernon (Tex.) Record*, Aug. 2, 1918.

³¹ Gloria Steelman, interview by author, Lampasas, Tex., Oct. 16, 2004.

dispatched with a refutation in the local paper.³² Although Sadler was soundly beaten by two primary opponents, she nevertheless carried six of the outlying precincts of Anderson County.³³ Goldston and Browning, however, won handily; Browning carried every precinct in Lampasas County to thrash her latecomer opponent by more than a two-to-one margin, while Goldston defeated her closest opponent by over four hundred votes to become the first woman in Donley history elected to county office.³⁴

Even these breakthroughs were inadequate to some suffrage leaders. Hunter later groused, “The women ought to have gone into politics more to show what they were in for. Should have shown that they were not in there for money but *just for pure love of their sex* and to advance the cause of humanity. *To advance the cause of humanity through emancipating the women* and make better laws and give better legal standing [emphasis added].”³⁵ This altruistic strain, clearly influenced by a sense of gender consciousness, permeates Hunter’s recollections of her suffrage work, which she considered the most important work of her life. “The women suffrage workers made it plain that they were not the ones to benefit afterward,” she recalled. Women that avoided or opposed suffrage “didn’t know it was their salvation. Didn’t have any idea in

³² “Mrs. Sadler Will Vote for Hobby,” *Palestine (Tex.) Daily Herald*, Jul. 13, 1918.

³³ “Results in the First Primary,” *Palestine (Tex.) Daily Herald*, Jul. 29, 1918; “Democratic Primary Results Donley County Saturday,” *Clarendon (Tex.) News*, Aug. 1, 1918.

³⁴ “Primary Election July 27, 1918,” *Lampasas (Tex.) Leader*, Aug. 2, 1918.

³⁵ Kate Hunter, untitled manuscript, n. d., Folder 6, Box 3, JYM, Part I, 10.

the world of the consequences of the movement.” The consequences for women were clear enough to Hunter: “The suffrage movement will have a far more reaching affect [*sic*] than anything else and it was a world movement.” It also meant something personal; Hunter remembered an older women “whom I dearly loved” who “almost wept to think of my being a refined lady going into that suffrage work.” The woman warned Hunter that she “would come back a changed woman,” whereupon Hunter replied, “I hope I will be a changed woman. I hope I will be a better woman.”³⁶

Like so many measures, success and failure are highly subjective notions properly evaluated only in broader context. For the women of the rural suffrage movement in Texas, their attempts to establish a coherent suffrage organization through which to mobilize public opinion or persuade lawmakers in Austin met repeatedly with failure. Rural suffragists never convinced hardened antisuffragists in the state legislature to change their minds, and organized suffrage activism played little, if any, role in the impressive primary turnout in 1918; it indisputably failed to shepherd the 1919 suffrage amendment to victory. As I have argued earlier, men and women in rural Texas were drawn to support woman suffrage only as a means to other, unrelated ends. Idealistic suffragists who sought to convince their peers that women were entitled to political rights by virtue of gender equality or as an extension of natural or constitutional rights could rarely define their efforts as successful.

As a conduit for ideas that challenged the limits of woman’s sphere and the gender hierarchy of rural Texas, however, the suffrage campaign succeeded. The public

³⁶ Kate Hunter, untitled manuscript, n. d., Folder 6, Box 3, JYM, Part I, 4, 10-12.

dialogue over the suffrage question permitted men and women alike to articulate feminist ideas and pursue objectives informed by feminist thought. Women reluctant to overtly embrace notions of gender equality and challenge patriarchy nonetheless probed the boundaries of domesticity by voting and campaigning for office, thereby legitimizing in the public consciousness claims on political power by women. Those who succeeded laid the groundwork for future women to pursue new avenues of authority that had once been denied them. For leaders like Kate Hunter, that ambition inspired them to persevere against discouraging odds: “It was time for suffrage. The evils had lasted long enough. The cycle had come around. It was put into the hearts of women and propelled, and intuition came from within that made us defy public opinion and try to go ahead and put that thing over. There was a bigger force behind us that made us go on.”³⁷

³⁷ Kate Hunter, untitled manuscript, n. d., Folder 6, Box 3, JYM, 13.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

In the years after American women secured voting rights, Palestine suffragist Kate Hunter received a questionnaire from the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs, requesting information for the book *Who's Who of the Womanhood of Texas*. Hunter never returned the form, but a cursory glance betrays a struggle to fit the manifold accomplishments of her life to date into the allotted space. Since the conclusion of the suffrage campaign, Hunter had continued the wildly successful Anderson County Hobby Club as the Good Citizenship League of Palestine, of which she was president for its first seven years. In 1921, Hunter organized a local unit of the Woman's National Foundation, which placed markers at historical locations in and around Palestine; she led that organization for seven years. In 1927, she created the Fort Houston Chapter of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas; she remained president for six years. Hunter also worked for the Texas Highway Department, served on the board of trustees for the Texas State Library and Historical Commission, joined the Texas State Historical Association, and published multiple works of poetry over several years, including a collection entitled "Vision" in 1936. One of the last questions on the form asked, "What do you consider your greatest achievement?" Hunter responded, "I think no work that may ever fall to me can compare with having had the privilege of contributing in a small way to the cause of women suffrage [and] of helping to bring it about."¹

¹ History Questionnaire, Mary Kate Hunter Papers (Special Collections, Palestine Public Library, Palestine, Texas; hereinafter MKH), microfilm reel 3; "Biographical

The woman suffrage campaign allowed women in rural Texas to participate in the process of modernization ongoing in the early twentieth century, as Americans endured a turbulent transition from a pastoral, agrarian society to an urban, industrial one. The dramatic expansion of national transportation and communications infrastructure fueled the growth of corporate capitalism, which in turn fostered rapid urbanization, a deluge of immigration from Europe and elsewhere, the disproportionate concentration of wealth upward, the consolidation of farmland into commercial agriculture, and the projection of American economic and military power throughout the world. Broad prosperity created new opportunities for women to leave the unpaid work of the home and pursue paid work. These opportunities were more available to single, childless women than married mothers, of course, and they came initially with criminal negligence common to most working-class positions at the time, but they nevertheless supplied American women for the first time with their own wages, autonomy, and power.²

Southern women experienced similar trends, albeit at a slower pace than their northern and northeastern sisters. By the 1900s, the effects of modernization in economic and cultural life illuminated a path for southern women that “their northeastern sisters had mapped a generation earlier.” By 1880, colonial investment

Information for the Texas State Historical Association Files,” Nov. 1944, MKH, microfilm reel 3.

² See Karen Manners Smith, “New Paths to Power: 1890-1920,” in *No Small Courage: A History of Women in the United States*, ed. Nancy Cott (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 375-385.

stimulated a revolution in southern infrastructure, and with new rails and roads came the urbanization trends already complete in the Northeast. Southern women, particularly in the cities, began to enter the workplace in greater numbers after 1860; by 1920, the number of southern women employed in professional work approached ten percent. Changes in the lives of women in Texas and the South occurred in other ways, as family size after 1900 began to shrink, and the spacing between children grew. A view of marriage as a companionate arrangement began to gain traction, and divorce rates steadily rose after 1900. These trends were less pronounced in the South, of course, but they nonetheless occurred.³

As the New South emerged, so, too, did the problems of urban life and labor that compelled women to seek access to public concerns. Meeting the challenges of urban life supplied southern women with opportunities to redefine their purview. The reform impulse that shepherded women from missionary aid to civic involvement to organized suffrage activism was retarded in the South by the sluggish emergence of urban industrialism; by 1910, however, sanitation and hygiene, urban corruption, poverty, child labor, and substandard education comprised only a few of the myriad social preoccupations offering southern women a means by which to project their influence into public life. Through settlement houses, the YWCA, and especially the Women's Christian Temperance Union, southern women mobilized their organizational networks

³ Elna C. Green, *Southern Strategies: Southern Women and the Woman Suffrage Question* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 14-15, 18-19; Smith, "New Paths to Power," 369-375; Walter L. Buenger, *The Path to a Modern South: Northeast Texas between Reconstruction and the New Deal* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 182.

to confront the malignant problems of liquor, homelessness, and poverty, efforts that ultimately dovetailed early in the twentieth century into the emergence of professional social work.⁴

Women's entry into more public roles at once fueled and fulfilled changing notions of American womanhood expressed by the reemergence of a national equal suffrage movement after 1890. The visibility of women as they placed public monuments in downtown squares, cleared land for the opening of public parks, secured space and funding for public libraries, and, in rural areas of the South, built "rest rooms" for farmwomen who came to town for market on weekends blurred the lines distinguishing the public from the private. Increasing numbers of women entered higher education at the end of the nineteenth century, where they encountered faculty bent on molding women into progressive idealists to the extent that university study "became an incubator for suffragism in some southern women."⁵

Suffragists in rural Texas embraced changing notions of womanhood despite having neither an industrial local economy nor a suffering urban population to facilitate the transition from organized evangelical or secular womanhood to organized suffragism. The failure of that transition to occur, in fact, is one of the key distinctions of rural suffrage advocacy, and affirms Elizabeth Hayes Turner's claim that urban life bound suffragists more tightly. Rural suffragists also faced different forms of resistance: the lingering effects of antebellum views of women; targeted manipulation of rural

⁴ Smith, "New Paths to Power," 390-392.

⁵ Green, *Southern Strategies*, 17.

public sentiment by power brokers who stood to lose from the woman vote; a homogenous Anglo population with a provincial world view; and the complicity of most rural women in the confining limits of southern domesticity.

Despite differing conditions, however, rural suffragists in Texas found success in the same tactics and rhetoric employed by their counterparts throughout the United States. Attempts to locate suffrage within a doctrine of gender equality categorically failed; even arguments couched in universal interpretations of liberty and equal Constitutional rights generally fell on deaf ears. Instead, rural suffragists mined prevailing gender norms and located their arguments within domesticity rather than overtly challenging it. Arguing for the ballot merely as a means to extend feminine virtue into the appropriate public realms of education, child custody law, and civic hygiene proved far more acceptable to rural Texans than any other approach. Aileen Kraditor has identified this language as an “argument of expediency” employed across the United States by the final generation of suffrage reformers. For all suffragists, it was a conscious choice; and for all suffragists, it was a successful choice.⁶

In his richly detailed history of Northeast Texas at the turn of the century, Walter Buenger concludes that the unexpectedly high number of women participating in the 1918 primary election “marked the continued influence of Texas [political] multifactionalism” rather than “some great shift in how Texans thought about the roles

⁶ Aileen S. Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement: 1890-1920* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1981), 71-74.

of women.”⁷ However true that may have been for the majority of men in Texas, the discourse and activity of rural Texas women during the suffrage campaign reveal an ongoing shift in how women viewed themselves. Like suffragists throughout Texas, the South, and the nation, rural suffragists introduced into public discourse, often at considerable cost, modern ideas that probed the limits of southern domesticity, questioned patriarchy, and broadened the definition of “woman’s place” in the South.

Even if suffrage failed to build a constituency among rural residents, the ideas nevertheless entered and remained a part of political dialogue. That some rural women campaigned for and secured elected municipal and county offices in 1918, having received the ballot only weeks before announcing their candidacy, demonstrates the immediate impact that the ideas of the suffrage movement had on women in rural Texas. That Texas women embraced political action more aggressively after 1919 through the League of Women Voters, or, like Kate Hunter or Minnie Fisher Cunningham in her 1927 U. S. Senate campaign, through other positions of public leadership, demonstrate the lingering influence of the movement on gender views in Texas.

The pollutant of exceptionalism all too often shapes the presentation of Texas history, but the rural suffrage campaign demonstrates that, despite the absence of an advanced urban culture, women in rural Texas nevertheless embraced modern views about the role of women in family and political life similar not only to those expressed by urban Texan women, but also by women throughout the South and nation. The unique features of rural life that deprived suffragists of a sustained, organized suffrage

⁷ Buenger, *The Path to a Modern South*, 175.

movement meant that rural women had to travel a different path from their urban and northern sisters, but the destination remained the same for them all: a more broadly defined, and thus more complete, role for women in American life.

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